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Velayati sends message to Saudi

OSLA (R) — Iran and Saudi Arabia discussed ways of coordinating stands on issues of interest to the Islamic World, the Iranian news agency IRNA said Sunday. It said Iran's Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati sent a letter to his Saudi counterpart Prince Saud Al Faisal. The message was delivered by Sabah Zanganeh, Iran's representative at the session of the Islamic Conference (OIC), who discussed with Prince Saud the need for a more active role by Muslim countries at the United Nations, IRNA said. It said Mr. Zanganeh and Prince Saud agreed on the need for coordination "between the stances of Iran and Saudi Arabia" in OIC as well as on the situation in former Soviet republics and the Balkans. On Thursday, Iran's President Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani received a letter from Saudi Arabia's King Fahd and another from Emir of Kuwait Sheikh Jaber Al Ahmad Al Sabah. Mr. Rafsanjani said Friday he was encouraged by friendly messages from Gulf leaders following months of tension. Iran's relations with the Gulf Cooperation Council — grouping Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Qatar, Bahrain and Oman — have been strained over a past year by a dispute between Iran and the UAE over three Gulf ships.

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to be named league post

AMMAN (J.T.) — The government intends to nominate Jordan's Ambassador to Egypt, Al Nizar for the post of League assistant secretary general to replace Mohammed Al Azzam. The sources said the government was holding consultations with Arab countries. Arab League Secretary General Amr Abdul Meguid is in Amman.

roads hit rain coast

OSLA (AP) — Dozens of people in Iran have drowned or missing due to flooding and landslides in urgent need of aid, fuel and food in coastal areas, Iranian radio reported. The radio report said the floods had stranded thousands of people in the Gulf of Oman, Bandar Abbas, Bandar Lengeh. Flooding hit on heavy rains in eastern Iran in recent days also destroyed thousands of acres and severely damaged roads, the radio reported. Electricity was cut off to the city of Shiraz and some neighbourhoods suffering from flood and fuel shortages, the radio said.

Japanese freed Yemeni kidnap

IAA (AP) — A Japanese national expert has been freed after a four-day abduction in Yemen, where a Canadian is still being held by a tribe locked in a dispute with the government, Asian diplomats disclosed Sunday. Koichiro Katsuragi, 50, graduated Wednesday along with an unidentified Yemeni national. The incident ended the lawlessness gripping the country as a result of many years of political parties that fought for power. North Yemen and South Yemen before the merger almost 20 years ago. It also raised the issue of foreigners working in that country could get caught in the anarchy. Canadian Schmitz, kidnapped on Jan. 21, remains a captive (see page 2). Japanese diplomats and executives of foreign companies based in a said Mr. Katsuragi, an executive of the Japanese International Cooperation Agency, was released Saturday along with a Yemeni colleague from the city of Aden.

q restores major phosphates complex

BAGHDAD (R) — Iraq has started a major complex damaged in the Gulf war to 60 per cent capacity, an official said. Industry and Minerals Minister Amir Hammoudi Al Taji told Reuters the complex near the Syrian border was now producing about 600,000 tonnes of phosphate fertilizer a year, down from 1.2 million tonnes a year before it was hit by U.S. and allied forces during the 1991 Gulf war.

amenel urges testinians to rtinue struggle

OSLA (R) — Iran's spiritual leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei urged the Palestinians to continue their struggle to defeat Israel. He said Palestinians expelled Israel to South Lebanon and a big headache for Israel is the strong and will eventually triumph over the enemy by relying on their faith and through perseverance and resistance. The Iranian news agency (NA) said Ayatollah Khamenei was addressing a group of foreign visitors in Iran to mark the anniversary of the Islamic Revolution that toppled the late Shah in 1979. "Whether they (the Palestinians) return (the occupied lands) or not, and whether they take them into custody or not, they (the Palestinians) would finally face Ayatollah Khamenei said. Ayatollah Khamenei, calling Israel a "constant enemy" to Islam, urged Muslims to counter Islamic movements in Algeria, Tajikistan, Palestine and other countries. He urged Muslims to exchange experiences and forge new ways in coping with their enemies.

House rejects ban against Jordan observing sanctions

Deputies kill motion for obligatory voting, endorse general amnesty law

By Aymann Al Safadi
 Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — In a decision that observers said saved Jordan otherwise certain economic difficulties and international political pressure, the Lower House of Parliament Sunday voted down a motion to draft a law banning the Kingdom from boycotting or imposing sanctions on Arab countries. Thirty-six out of 70 deputies rejected the proposal after 17 parliamentarians and Prime Minister Sharif Zeid Ben Shaker took the floor to express their views on the proposed bill.

Israel jails 5 returned evictees, says expulsion policy remains

TEL AVIV (Agencies) — Israel took back five sick Palestinian evictees Sunday but said it had not abandoned the policy of expulsions in exceptional cases. Israel Radio said the sick Palestinians were taken from a hospital in Israeli-occupied South Lebanon to a military base in northern Israel. The five were moved to hospital last month after falling sick at a camp in between Israeli and Lebanese army lines which still houses 396 evictees. "Five of the deportees that were in a hospital in Marjayoun (Lebanon) were returned today by the army. The five were included in the list of 101 deportees that the government of Israel decided to allow to return," the army spokesman said. Israel's offer was for the men to return to their former status, and Israel Radio said the five were taken to an Israeli prison. An Israeli ambulance and four

police and passed a draft law on a general pardon issued by His Majesty King Hussein in November. Urging deputies to place national interests above rhetoric, Sharif Zeid said he "wished that the commitment to national responsibility" had prevented the raising of what he called an unjustifiable motion to draft a law prohibiting Jordan from observing sanctions on other Arab countries. Reiterating Jordan's commitment to Arab causes and pointing to its efforts to end the "injustice" against Iraq, Sharif Zeid said Jordan was obliged to respect the United Nations Charter and U.N. resolutions, which take precedence over local laws. While the 40 deputies who put forward the motion did not name Iraq in particular, the comments of the prime minister and deputies centred on the international

sanctions the U.N. clamped on Baghdad following its August 1990 invasion of Kuwait. "Jordan has been doing its best to alleviate the suffering of (Iraq), but if we want to fulfil our national duty towards a brethren country and our constitutional obligation to our people, we can only intensify efforts so that Iraq comes out of its isolation under the sanctions," Sharif Zeid told the House. He said Jordan would do all it could to support Iraq and its people through offering advice and support on the international arena. "This helps Iraq and does not inflict harm on our country," he said. Speaking in support of the motion, Deputy Speaker Al Rimeid said imposing sanctions against Arab countries violates the Charter of the Arab League and conflicts with the principles of the Great Arab Revolt, Islam (Continued on page 5)



Palestinian youths carry the body of 16-year-old Rimal Abdel Nabi who was shot dead by Israeli soldiers Sunday (AFP photo)

Evictees slam U.N. silence, killings

MARJ AL Zuhour, Lebanon (Agencies) — Palestinian evictees staged a protest sit-in inside their tents in South Lebanon Sunday to complain that the United Nations is ignoring their plight and the killing of Palestinians by Israel.

The 396 men, banished by Israel on Dec. 17, spent the morning crowded into 50 tents reading from the Koran. "Our sit-in is to protest against the United Nations and the international community for their silence on the crimes of the Nazi Zionists in the occupied territories," said Abdul Aziz Al Rantisi, the leader of the evictees. "It is also a protest against the silence of the U.N. Security Council over Israel's failure to implement Resolution 799, which stipulates our immediate return," he added. He and spokesman Aziz Dweik

were the only evictees seen outside the tents in the muddy hillside camp. An Israeli offer to take back 101 evictees and to cut the term in exile for the others has apparently put an end to serious talks of U.N. sanctions against Israel. The United States, which dominates the U.N. Security Council, has said it sees no need for further U.N. action. But Arab states and the evictees have rejected the offer and insist on implementation of Security Council Resolution 799. The crisis is holding up Middle East peace talks. Israeli troops shot dead six Palestinians in the occupied Gaza Strip in two days of clashes. Soldiers also shot and wounded 27 Palestinians in demonstrations throughout the Strip. Lebanon, which has refused to take in the evictees or allow them

supplies, will intensify its contacts over the crisis and the Arab-Israeli negotiations. Official sources said President Elias Hrawi would go to Damascus for a summit with Syrian leader Hafez Al Assad while Prime Minister Rafiq Al Hariri would go to Cairo Thursday for talks with President Hosni Mubarak. The sources said Lebanon was trying through diplomatic channels to persuade U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher to include Beirut in a Middle East tour starting Feb. 17. Mr. Christopher will try to put the peace talks back on track. Dr. Rantisi again urged Arab states to tell Mr. Christopher they insisted on Israel taking back the evictees before they discuss resuming the talks, now seen delayed until mid-April.

16-year-old killed in Shu'fat

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (R) — Israeli forces shot dead a 16-year-old youth in a refugee camp in Arab East Jerusalem on Sunday, taking the Palestinian death toll in three days of clashes to seven. A further 19 Palestinians were wounded in the Israeli-occupied Gaza Strip in clashes with troops Sunday, taking the total hurt in three days to 72. The clashes began when soldiers killed three Palestinian militants in a car on Friday in the Gaza Strip. Soldiers killed three other Palestinians during subsequent clashes. "Three of those killed were terrorists and what happened is for the benefit of security," Foreign Minister Shimon Peres told reporters when he left the weekly cabinet session on Sunday. Palestinian sources said Israeli paramilitary police shot dead Rimal Abdel Nabi in Shu'fat refugee camp in Arab East Jerusalem Sunday. Police said an Arab youth was "brought dead to hospital in East Jerusalem with a bullet wound in his throat after paramilitary police fired rubber bullets and warning shots to disperse youths throwing stones at them in Shu'fat." Nabi's death took to 1,010 the number of Palestinians killed by Israelis since the start of a revolt against Israeli rule in December 1987. Elsewhere, the army arrested Reuters reporter Taher Shritleh and Reuters television cameraman Marwan Al Gholi who were covering clashes in Gaza City Sunday. It was Mr. Gholi's second arrest (Continued on page 2)

Iraq warns Iran over infiltrations

BAGHDAD (AP) — Iraq warned Iran of possible retaliation Sunday for what Baghdad called a series of attacks by Iranian infiltrators who opened fire on a car and bus last month. The Foreign Ministry, in a statement released to journalists, said a formal protest was lodged in Baghdad with the Iranian embassy. "The Iranian envoy was warned against repetition of such terrorist activities and told that Iraq fully reserves the right of retaliation for these attacks at the proper time and with the proper means," the statement said.

The statement said that Iranian infiltrators opened fire Jan. 11 on an Iraqi car, while others shot at a bus five days later. It did not specify the location of the attacks or any casualties. Iraq has frequently complained of Iranian infiltration in the south, home to Shiite Muslims that Baghdad suspects of harbouring sympathisers for Iran's Shiite fundamentalist regime. Iraq maintains that Iranian infiltrators, saboteurs, Iraqi dissidents, Iraqi army deserters and common Iraqi criminals have attacked civilians in the south. The Mujahideen-e-Khalq, an

Iranian opposition movement which has an army in eastern Iraq, said Iranian Revolutionary guards ambushed one of its vehicles inside Iraq on Jan. 11. They shot dead one of its soldiers and wounded two. On Jan. 21, a bomb exploded on a passenger bus the movement was using but no one was injured, it added. The Mujahideen have not mentioned an attack on Jan. 16. The daily newspaper Babel meanwhile lashed out at Kuwait's ruling Al Sabah family, saying foreign powers would not be able to protect the Kuwaiti regime.

Algeria extends emergency

ALGIERS (Agencies) — The state of emergency in force in Algeria for a year to help combat Islamic extremists is being extended for an undetermined period, military-backed rulers announced Sunday. The widely-expected announcement came amid reports of eight more killings, a bomb alert at the University of Algiers and the explosion of a small bomb in a government building in Constantine. A communique by the High State Council, carried by the official AFS news agency, said the state of emergency, declared Feb. 9, 1992 for a year, was being extended for an undetermined period. The ruling five-man council replaced President Chadli Benjedid in January 1992, as part of an army effort to thwart the rise to power of Muslim fundamentalists, who were winning parliamentary elections. The voting was cancelled and the leading Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) party was banned. The manoeuvres sparked a wave of violence by Islamic extremists which has left at least 600 people dead despite a series of security measures, including the state of emergency, a curfew declared Dec. 5 for large parts of Algeria, a new anti-terrorist law and special courts. Violence threatens to increase with the call Jan. 12 by the FIS number two, Ali Belhadj, for the people to rise up with the help of the army and police and join the extremists' war with authorities. Mr. Belhadj, serving a 12-year-prison term, sneaked the communique from his cell in the Blida military prison. At least eight people were killed over a three-day period from Thursday to Saturday, security officials said. Among the dead were a policeman and two civil police employees who had been kidnapped Jan. 22 in Algiers. Their bodies were found Thursday, their throats slashed "after having been monstrously tortured," the police statement said. Another policeman was killed Thursday in Algiers by a person who fled.

Anwar Al Khatib dies at 76

AMMAN (J.T.) — The former governor of Jerusalem, Anwar Al Khatib, died Sunday in the Israeli-occupied Holy City at the age of 76. Mr. Khatib served in a number of senior posts and was a member of the Higher Islamic Council for Jerusalem. His tenure as governor of Jerusalem ended with the 1967 war when Israeli forces occupied the Holy City and the West Bank. Prime Minister Sharif Zeid



Anwar Al Khatib
 Ben Shaker and Speaker of the Lower House of Parliament Abdul Latif Arabiyat expressed their sympathies and sent condolences in statements issued Sunday.

Marines help Somalis return home

MOGADISHU (Agencies) — Under the watchful eyes of U.S. Marines and their helicopters, families of a warring clan crossed peacefully into a no-man's land of their rivals Sunday to reclaim their homes after two years of civil war. But it was questionable whether the truce would hold. The Marines plan to stay in the disputed territory until a United Nations peacekeeping force relieves them. That date has not been announced. Omar Salad, a member of the peace and reconciliation committee of Mogadishu city, said up to

600 Somalis had crossed from the north to the south Sunday to reclaim their homes from squatters. Many of their homes were destroyed in fighting that along with famine and disease claimed the lives of 350,000 Somalis last year. Those without homes were settling into a bullet-riddled youth centre with mattresses and large cooking pots. Mr. Salad said hundreds more likely would follow in the days to come. After two days of fighting, streets Sunday were bustling with hundreds of men, women and children. Shops and markets were

open. The Marines entertained the crowds with recorded music played over a loudspeaker. North Mogadishu is ruled by warlord Ali Mahdi Mohammad. The clan opposing him are followers of General Farrah Aidood, who controls south Mogadishu. The sporadic fighting broke out Friday and continued Saturday after Ali Mahdi people had tried to prematurely reclaim their homes occupied by squatters before an agreement was reached. More than a dozen Somalis were reported killed in the fighting.

Authorities seek to allay 'Abu Shakoush' fears

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Alarmed over what was seen as a disturbing media handling of a series of attacks on shopkeepers in Amman since mid-September, security authorities Sunday sought to reassure the public that the situation was under control and there was no need to panic. Major-General Fadel Ali Fheid, director-general of the Public Security Department, in comments carried by the Jordan News Agency, Petra, said that the Jordanian police had a proven record of cracking down on the most difficult crimes and the latest spate of attacks would not be any different. He said police had intensi-

fied their investigations into the attacks, attributed to one or more criminals nicknamed by the media as "Abu Shakoush" (hammerman), and that police had some clues with which they could work in their probe. "Investigations are continuing in light of the available information and evidence," Gen. Fheid told Petra. "The assaults will be identified and brought to justice," he promised. "The fortunes of these criminals will not be any better than those of their predecessors in Jordan," he added. The police chief refrained from using the media-adopted term "Abu Shakoush" in his comments and did not provide any direct clue to whether police believed a sole assailant

was behind the eight attacks or several criminals were involved. But informed sources said police were strongly considering the possibility that more than one individual or group could be responsible for the attacks, which occurred between Sept. 13 and Feb. 4. "Every possibility and every clue available is under the microscope," said a highly-placed source. "Investigators have to consider every factor involved. The possibility that more than one person or group could be involved in the attacks is being strongly considered," the source added. Gen. Fheid confirmed that two deaths occurred in the eight incidents, in which, according to police sources, the assailant (s) hit shopkeepers/attendants with a blunt instrument — believed to be a medium-sized hammer and hence the nickname "hammerman." Six others suffered serious injuries. All

victims were robbed of cash they carried on their person. According to the sources, the first death was that of 47-year-old Youssef Ahmad Abdul Kader Al Satri at the Issa Pharmacy on Jabal Hussein in an attack which occurred during the night of 28/29 Sept. 1992; the second fatality was that of Suleiman Farhan Shuhait, 68, at Salem Electrical Appliances shop in the same neighbourhood on Feb. 4. In both cases, as well as in the six other incidents where the victims escaped death but suffered serious injuries, a hammer was believed to be the weapon used by the assailant (s). The highly-placed source said police had released a man arrested in the Wihdat area as a potential suspect. The man, Khalil Muhammad Al Bawadi, 35, was detained after he was seen carrying a hammer which he tried to get rid of (Continued on page 2)



Major-General Fadel Ali Fheid

PLO slashes spending because of money shortage

By Salah Nasrawi
The Associated Press

TUNIS — The loss of financial support from Arab oil states has driven the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) to austerity measures that could erode its support among Palestinians and jeopardise Middle East peace talks.

Issad Al Wazir, head of the Social Affairs Department, said the PLO's \$300 million annual budget has been slashed by 70 per cent in the 2½ years since rich Gulf governments stopped contributing.

She said the budget of her department, which is based in Jordan and handles PLO welfare programmes, had been reduced from \$8 million a month to \$2 million.

The belt-tightening causes hardship for hundreds of thousands of Palestinians who depend on the PLO and affects the popularity of its leader, Yasser Arafat, particularly among the 1.7 million Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

For years, the PLO has made monthly payments totalling about \$8 million to an estimated 90,000 Palestinian

families, or 700,000 people. The welfare system embraces the Israeli-occupied territories and refugees in Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Iraq and Yemen.

There already are signs that Israeli-backed Muslim fundamentalists are winning over many Palestinians in the occupied territories.

Group such as Hamas and Islamic Jihad are exploiting widespread frustration over lack of progress in the U.S.-sponsored peace talks that began in October 1990. They oppose the peace talks, and if they win enough popular support, could force Mr. Arafat to order a withdrawal by Palestinian negotiators.

Gulf states halted aid to the PLO to punish it for supporting Iraq in the Gulf crisis.

The financial crisis is causing dissension within the PLO. At a meeting of the Central Council in Tunis, aides assailed Mr. Arafat for not increasing payments to the families of men killed by the Israelis.

"Where are we going to get the money?" he shouted angrily. "We can barely make ends meet."

That was a far cry from the

fat days of the 1970s, when the movement was rolling in funds and operated more like an international conglomerate than a liberation movement.

A measure of Mr. Arafat's desperation has been his recent approaches to Saudi Arabia for a reconciliation.

In January, Mahmoud Abbas, a member of the PLO Executive Committee and a close associate of Mr. Arafat, publicly apologised to the Saudis for the pro-Iraq stand.

Many PLO officials criticised the apology, but Palestinian sources said poverty leaves Mr. Arafat little choice.

So far, there is no sign that the Saudis or other Gulf states will resume their contributions.

"The situation is tragic," Mrs. Wazir said. She is the widow of Khalil Al Wazir, Mr. Arafat's military commander, who was killed in Tunis in April 1988, apparently by Israeli agents.

Mr. Arafat reduced PLO spending by 30 per cent in 1991, trimmed the staff at the Tunis headquarters, closed 20 of the 90 foreign missions and banned first-class travel.

In recent weeks, according to PLO sources, he has cut all

salaries by five to seven per cent, laid off more employees and shut down some PLO publications.

Even employees still on the job complain that salaries sometimes are weeks late, even months.

Palestinian officials summoned to Tunis now stay in low-priced hotels instead of the five-star establishments they once used, or are put up by friends, the sources reported.

They said travel has been curtailed and Mr. Arafat personally approves all air tickets. He has reduced housing and education allowances and ordered officials to transfer their children from private to public schools, the sources said.

Assessing the PLO's finances is difficult. Its books are not open to inspection and the few people with access to them are not prepared to talk.

Insiders said the movement probably has about \$2 billion in assets, much of it invested around the world. That is half what they believe the PLO had before the Gulf crisis. The investments are generally believed to earn about 10

per cent. There are reports that Mr. Arafat has used some assets to make up for the loss of contributions, but the sources say he is reluctant to endanger the PLO's long-term financial security.

In addition to the welfare programme, the PLO makes payments to families of the more than 10,500 men imprisoned in the occupied territories and Israel.

The PLO also finances the Palestinian uprising in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. What that costs is not known, but the Israelis are believed to have seized about \$20 million in smuggled cash since the rebellion began in December 1987.

Palestinians in Jordan and Lebanon have demanded increases in their allowances to keep up with inflation. With radical opposition to the peace talks growing, Mr. Arafat can ill afford to antagonise them.

To make matters worse, Hamas, the fundamentalist Palestinian movement, is apparently using money from Iran and possibly Saudi Arabia to woo support away from Mr. Arafat.



GAZA IS BURNING: A mother and child pass tests that left more than a dozen wounded in clashes burning tyres Sunday after fierce Palestinian protests with Israeli soldiers (AFP photo)

Baghdad says it needs strong armed forces in volatile region

By Jane Arraf
Reuters

BAGHDAD — Iraq needs strong armed forces to defend itself in a dangerous region, a minister said Sunday.

General Amir Hammoudi Al Saadi, who as minister of military industrialisation helped build up Iraq's weapons programmes, said the government did however see openings for dialogue with Iran, its main rival in the Gulf.

"This has traditionally been an area of certain aggressive design and ... we feel we need a strong defensive capability to maintain peace and stability," Gen. Saadi told Reuters.

He was answering a question on what kind of military forces Iraq needed to defend its border with Iran. The two countries fought for eight years until 1988.

"Iraq is a force in the area and it has legitimate defence needs," added Gen. Saadi, who is now minister with the newly created industry and minerals portfolio.

"I can also see some hope for dialogue (with Tehran) and reason to prevail," he said.

The Iranian government gained credit in Baghdad last month for condemning air raids on Iraq by the United States and its Western allies. Washington said Iraq was flouting the terms of

a Gulf war ceasefire. Iraq, in a bid to break out of economic and political isolation, has since made overtures to U.S. President Bill Clinton, calling for dialogue and refraining from shooting at Western planes which fly over the north and the south.

The new Clinton administration has not yet responded.

Gen. Saadi said a U.N. decision to send more troops to the Iraqi-Kuwaiti border was in line with the policies of former President George Bush and he did not expect change overnight.

"It could probably not be helped, given the previous momentum of the Bush policy," he said.

Asked about the status of Iraq's claim to Kuwait, the minister referred to a statement by Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz last month. Mr. Aziz said: "The chapter of Kuwait is closed."

Gen. Saadi declined to elaborate and would not say if the chapter could be reopened. "Who can say? (The Kuwaiti file) is committed to the archives," he said.

Asked if Iraq had resumed producing tanks and other military hardware permitted under the Gulf war ceasefire, Gen. Saadi

said: "I think every country is entitled to produce what it can for its legitimate defence and Iraq is no exception."

The minister, who oversees factories that have come under scrutiny from U.N. teams dismantling Iraq's weapons of mass destruction, called for further talks on plans for long-term monitoring of Iraq's arms programmes.

"There are some aspects ... we are willing to comply with but there are others that could be interpreted in different ways, more connected with people and personnel than supplies."

"That is more controversial. We are not happy with that. We have to talk about it ... with the U.N.," he said.

U.N. inspectors have said there can be no negotiation on plans for long-term monitoring to ensure that Iraq does not rebuild the weapons programmes.

Gen. Saadi repeated that Iraq was now considering whether to give the U.N. special commission a list of the companies which supplied equipment for its nuclear weapons programme.

U.N. officials say that without the list they cannot certify that Iraq is complying with ceasefire resolutions.

Husseini urges Romanian role in Mideast peace talks

BUCHAREST (AP) — Faissal Husseini, chief advisor to the Palestinian negotiating team in Middle East peace talks, visited Romania Saturday for talks with President Ion Iliescu and other officials.

At a news conference, Mr. Husseini reiterated the Palestinians' rejection of a deal worked out last week between Israel and the United States allowing for the return of some of nearly 400 Palestinians expelled to Lebanon in December.

Mr. Husseini said Israel's publication Friday of a list of 101 who could return "is not enough ... we insist on full implementation of (U.N. Security Council Resolution 799), which calls for the return of all expellees."

"There must be a principle of no more deportation," he said.

Israel accused the men of ties to radical Islamic groups opposed to the peace process and allegedly responsible for attacks in Israel and the occupied territories.

But Lebanon refused to accept the expellees, leaving them stranded for the past seven weeks southern Lebanon.

The peace talks, which had been expected to resume shortly after President Bill Clinton took office, are stalled over the issue.

Mr. Husseini, barred by Israel from formally heading the Palestinian delegation because of his close ties to the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO), is nonetheless considered its unofficial leader.

He indicated the Palestinians might abandon negotiations altogether if Israel did not take back all the expellees.

"We decided (no negotiations) because we were convinced it was the better way ... but we have alternatives, painful alternatives," he said, refusing to elaborate.

After meeting with Mr. Husseini, Mr. Iliescu said Romania, "given its good relations with Israel as well as the Arab states ... offers its good offices for achieving a climate for negotiations."

Mr. Husseini agreed Romania "can do much, especially in the multilateral talks" on water-sharing and other regional issues. But he declined to say whether he had asked for any Romanian mediation regarding the expellees.

Communist dictator Nicolae Ceausescu, who was ousted in 1989, aspired for years to a role in bringing about Middle East peace

and took pride in his close ties to both sides of the conflict.

Romania was the only communist country to maintain diplomatic relations with Israel after the 1967 war — and also one of the few anywhere to recognise the State of Palestine declared in 1988.

Mr. Husseini also met with Foreign Minister Teodor Melescanu and other officials.

The visit, Mr. Husseini's first to Romania, was shrouded in secrecy somewhat reminiscent of past visits here by PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat.

Media reports said Mr. Husseini is to leave Monday for a tour of other unspecified European capitals. But Mr. Husseini refused to comment on his itinerary, citing "logistical problems."

Rushdie upbeat

LONDON (R) — British author Salman Rushdie says he has visited eight countries in a bid to drum up international support against Iran's death order for blaspheming Islam issued four years ago.

Mr. Rushdie, revealing details of some of the trips for the first time in an article in the Sunday Times, said his visits to the United States, Denmark, Spain, Norway, Germany, Sweden, Canada and Ireland over the past year had encouraged him in his quest to bring international pressure to bear on Tehran.

In Canada last December, Mr. Rushdie, who has lived in hiding under police protection since the death order was issued, said the effect of his meetings was "electrifying."

"Within 48 hours resolutions demanding that the Canadian government take this issue to the United Nations and pursue it at the World Court had been rushed through the Canadian parliament with all party support and the government had agreed to act upon them," he said.

Last October in Germany, Iran's most important trading partner, the foreign minister told Mr. Rushdie a cultural agreement had been put on hold and made contingent on the death order against him being cancelled.

The order, issued by Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini on Feb. 14, 1989, accused Mr. Rushdie of blaspheming Islam in his book "The Satanic Verses."

Mr. Rushdie said he had visited Dublin since the new Irish government was formed on Jan. 12 and held talks with new Foreign Minister Dick Spring and met President Mary Robinson.

"Next stop perhaps President Clinton" he added.

Mr. Rushdie also urged the British government, which he has criticised in the past for inaction, to do more, in particular by spearheading the international campaign on his behalf.

"What is needed now is for the British government to take advantage of all the goodwill generated by the many, many people working with me and on my behalf in a dozen or so countries, and to place itself in the forefront of the international community's attempts to end this continuing scandal," he said.

Kuwait sees nationality for some stateless people

KUWAIT (R) — A senior Kuwaiti government minister has proposed granting nationality to some stateless residents to try to solve one of the emirate's most sensitive problems.

Defence Minister Sheikh Ali Sabah Al Salem Al Sabah said in an interview published in Al Watan newspaper Sunday some stateless people deserved citizenship for helping in the 1991 Gulf war for the liberation of Kuwait from Iraqi occupation.

It was believed to be the first time a minister, who is also a senior member of Kuwait's ruling family, has made the proposal publicly.

The issue of bedouins, or "without," has become increasingly controversial because of a debate over the 40 per cent fall in Kuwait's total population since the Iraqi invasion of 1990.

The public authority for civil information said last week there were 53,376 bedouins in Kuwait over 15 years of age, out of a total Kuwaiti and non-Kuwaiti population of 1.3 million.

Tens of thousands of other bedouins left during the occupation. Few have been allowed to return.

Sheikh Ali said of bedouins, many of whom work in the security forces: "As a Kuwaiti I have the honour to have Kuwaiti brothers in that (stateless) category who defended Kuwait."

"Those (stateless people) should have high rank in Kuwaiti society and this rank can be either

by granting them Kuwaiti nationality, or by granting him permanent residency, or other things."

Most of the bedouins are descended from nomads from the deserts of Arabia who settled in Kuwait but could not obtain citizenship because of strict nationality laws.

The invasion indirectly gave publicity to their anomalous status because of a debate over Kuwait's demographic structure.

Before the invasion Kuwaiti citizens accounted for less than 30 per cent of the population. The government favours making Kuwaitis a majority but already the proportion of Kuwaitis to non-Kuwaitis, both bedouin and foreigners, has slipped to 45-55.

Sheikh Ali, reiterating statements by other government officials, also proposed studying whether to grant more Kuwaiti nationality to the right to vote — eligible voters account for only 15 per cent of Kuwaitis.

Kuwait's strict nationality laws, established in the early 1960s, stipulate that voters must be males aged 21 and older and able to trace family origins in Kuwait back to 1920 or before.

"Loyalty cannot be divided and the love (of the country) cannot be divided," Sheikh Ali said. "A Kuwaiti, whether of the first (voting) category or the second (non-voting), at the end is a Kuwaiti, and whoever established those differences must have had their own reasons at that time."

Yemen says it cannot ensure foreigners' safety

SANAA (R) — Yemen said it could not guarantee the safety of foreigners after a spate of hostage-taking and asked its largest oil operator to consider shutting down production, an oil industry source said Sunday.

The Western source said Texas-based Hunt Oil decided to maintain normal operations after a series of discussions requested by Oil Minister Saleh Abu Bakr Ben Hussainoun in the past week.

But in the face of actions by lawless tribes, it will "continue to monitor the situation and curtail the movement of foreign staff and make them less of a target," he added.

"The minister advised Hunt to consider shutting down production because the government could not provide adequate protection for foreign employees," the source told Reuters.

Hunt produces 85 per cent of Yemen's 200,000 barrels a day from the Ma'arib region where the Gidean and Nilam tribes control parts of the road from Sanaa and are hijacking cars.

The minister "is very concerned about the safety of the workers after a rash of kidnappings and lawlessness around the (production) area," the source added.

He said the capital Sanaa, about 200 kilometres west of the Ma'arib, remained secure.

Authoritative sources told Reuters that tribesmen set free two hostages, a Japanese man and a

Yemeni, on Saturday after holding them for three days. But a Canadian businessman kidnapped on Jan. 24 was still being held.

The Japanese and Yemeni dam experts were seized about 70 kilometres east of Sanaa, the sources said.

Canadian Mike Schmitz, from Edmonton in the western province of Alberta, was abducted by Hadhrami tribesmen. They were apparently using him as a bargaining chip in a land dispute in Dhamar province, about 100 kilometres south of Sanaa.

"It is a mixture of everything. Criminals taking vehicles, creed and political statements. Some tribes want to be heard so they are using the foreigners," the oil industry source said.

Hunt has employed extra guards, is moving staff by helicopter and from operational sites and has restricted travel outside the capital, the oil source said.

But it had not yet decided to send dependents home, he added.

A Canadian diplomat in Sanaa said last week he was optimistic negotiations would lead to Mr. Schmitz's release.

"He has been treated well. He's in good spirits," said Vickie Roundkjian, vice-consul in the Canadian embassy in Saudi Arabia, who has been in Yemen since last Saturday.

JORDAN TELEVISION

Tel: 77311-19
PROGRAMME TWO
18:00 Pili Dejeuner Compris
19:00 News in French
19:15 Magazine Sportif
19:30 News in Hebrew
20:00 News in Arabic
20:30 Step by Step
21:10 Martin Bay
22:00 News in English
22:30 Jordan Weekly
22:40 Vietnam

PRAYER TIMES

6:52 Fajr
10:21 Sunrise
11:59 Dhuhr
14:52 Asr
17:19 Maghreb
18:57 Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church Swedieh, Tel. 810740
Assembly of God Church, Tel. 632785
St. Joseph Church Tel. 624900
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 637440
St. Isidore Church Tel. 661757
Protestant Church Tel. 622666
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 623541
Anglican Church Tel. 652636, Tel. 625543.

AMMAN Catholic Church Tel. 771331

Amman Orthodox Church Tel. 772561
St. Ephraim Church Tel. 771751
Amman International Church Tel. 683326
Evangelical Lutheran Church Tel. 811295
The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints Tel. 823824, 654932
Church of the Nazareth Tel. 675691.

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology.

It will be partly cloudy and relatively cold. In the afternoon, a cold front accompanying a depression centred over Cyprus will affect northern Jordan, extending gradually to cover all parts of the Kingdom at night. It will get colder Tuesday and snow is expected to fall on areas with an elevation of 900 metres and more, which include Ajlun, western Amman and the southern heights. Winds will be westerly fresh. In Aqaba, winds will be northerly moderate to fresh and seas calm.

Mia./Max. temp.
Amman 3/9
Aqaba 6/17
Dahra 1/11
Jordan Valley 8/15

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

NIGHT DUTY

AMMAN:
Dr. Walid Al Masi 675485
Dr. Abdul Odeh Al Masi 750046
Dr. Muhammad Al Sawra 720056
Dr. Abdul Hadi Tayem 620115
Firas pharmacy 661912
Ferdows pharmacy 778336
Al Asma pharmacy 670755
Nasrallah pharmacy 626072
Al Salam pharmacy 636730
Yacoub pharmacy 644945
Shamsi pharmacy 637660
Nasrallah pharmacy 623672
Najib pharmacy 847632

IRBID:

Dr. Ali Al Samman 240053
Alquds pharmacy (-)

ZARQA:

Dr. Abdul Karim Khashabeh 983023

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre 637111
Civil Defence Department 661111
Civil Defence (immediate) 620341
Civil Defence Emergency 199
Rescue Police 192, 621111, 637777
Fire Brigade 891228
Blood Bank 775221
Highway Police 843402
Traffic Police 893390
Public Security Department 63021
Hotel Complaints 605800
Price Complaints 661176
Water and Sewerage 661176
Complaints 897467
Amman Municipality 787111
Complaints 897467
Telephone Information (direct assistance) 121
Overseas Calls 010230
Central Amman Telephone 623101
Abdullah Telephone Repairs 661101
Jordan Television 771111

HOSPITALS

Radio Jordan 774111
Water Authority 680100
Jordan Electricity Authority 815615
Electric Power 636381
RJ Flight Information 06-53200
Queen Alia Int. Airport 06-53200
AMMAN:
Hussein Medical Centre 813813/32
Khaldi Maternity, J. Amn 644281/6
Al-Hadi Maternity, J. Amn 642412/2
Jabal Amman Maternity 642562
Malhas, J. Amman 636140
Palestine, Shamsi 664171/4
Shamsi Hospital 669131
University Hospital 643845
Al-Muhammed Hospital 667227/9
The Islamic, Abdali 666127/7
Al-Ahli, Abdali 664164/6
Itahia, Al-Mahajra 777101/2
Al-Badr, J. Ashrafieh 775111/26
Army, Marja 291611/15
Qasbi Alia Hospital 602240/50
Qasbi Hospital 674135
ZARQA:
Zarqa Gov. Hospital (09)983323

FOR THE TRAVELLER

QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

This information is supplied by Royal Jordanian (RJ) information department at the Queen Alia International Airport Tel. (06)532005, where it should always be verified.

ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights (Terminal 1)

07:15 Sanaa (RJ)

Other Flights (Terminal 2)

06:15 Beirut (ME)
06:25 Aden (MS)
06:30 Aden (AL)
10:00 New Delhi (RJ)
10:15 Beirut (RJ)
10:45 Cairo (RJ)
12:30 Bangkok (RJ)
19:10 Casablanca, Tunis (RJ)
22:20 London (RJ)

Other Flights (Terminal 2)

06:00 Khartoum (SU)
06:30 Aden (AL)
06:35 Aden (MS)
12:40 Abu Dhabi, Dubai (GF)
16:30 Istanbul (RJ)
18:30 Vienna, Larissa (OS)
19:00 Dubai, Damascus (EM)

DEPARTURES

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights (Terminal 1)

06:15 Beirut (RJ)
06:25 London (RJ)
11:15 Toronto Montreal (RJ)
12:10 London (RJ)
12:15 Frankfurt (RJ)
12:45 Cairo (RJ)
18:30 Dhahran (RJ)
20:30 Abu Dhabi (RJ)
20:30 Bahrain, Doha (RJ)
21:40 Dubai (RJ)

Other Flights (Terminal 2)

06:00 Khartoum (SU)
06:30 Aden (AL)
06:35 Aden (MS)
12:40 Abu Dhabi, Dubai (GF)
16:30 Istanbul (RJ)
18:30 Vienna, Larissa (OS)
19:00 Dubai, Damascus (EM)

MARKET PRICES

Upstoppers price in Jds per kg

Apples 700/500
Bananas 700/700
Banana (Mukammal) 640/640
Beans 650/450
Cabbage 160/100
Carrot 250/180
Cauliflower 210/160
Cucumbers (large) 150/80
Cucumbers (small) 300/250
Eggplant 320/220
Garlic 600/350
Grapes 180/120
Lemon 200/100
Marrow (large) 440/380
Marrow (small) 80
Onion (dry) 210/130

HOME NEWS IN BRIEF

Queen to visit Salt handicraft centre

AMMAN (J.T.) — Her Majesty Queen Noor Monday will pay a visit to the Salt Handicrafts Training Centre where she is scheduled to inspect handicraft training and production facilities. Included in Her Majesty's visit programme will be workshops for silk screening, ceramics and decoration, in addition to the well-established clay production section, pilot weaving and ceramics production units and the showroom. The Salt Handicrafts Training Centre was established in 1987 by the Salt Development Corporation (SDC) with funding and technical assistance from the Italian government. Noor Al Hussein Foundation (NHFF) took over management and development of the centre in March 1988 after an accord was signed with SDC.

Crown Prince sends condolences to Barto family

AMMAN (Petra) — His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan Sunday delegated his secretary to convey his condolences to the Barto family over the death of Ali Barto. His Royal Highness Prince Mohammad, the Personal Representative of His Majesty King Hussein, Sunday called at the Barto home, and offered condolences to the family.

Princess Sarvath discusses education needs with Canadians

AMMAN (Petra) — Her Royal Highness Princess Sarvath received Sunday head of the Canadian Community Colleges Society Roy Murray, President of the Canadian Federal College of Education, and the two Canadian officials discussed educational issues, particularly vocational education in community colleges. They also discussed the issue of education meeting the needs of the local society as a means to counter the problem of unemployment. At the end of the meeting, the Canadian delegation presented Princess Sarvath with a certificate in appreciation of her contributions to the Jordanian-Canadian Programme on Learning Disabilities. The meeting was attended by Senators Saeed Al Tal and Husni Ayesh and several other officials.

Senate judiciary discusses 2 laws

AMMAN (Petra) — The Upper House of Parliament Judiciary Committee Sunday discussed the revised telecommunication law, and made a recommendation to the Senate to adopt it, as referred by the Lower House without any amendments. The committee also discussed the draft law on illegal acquisition of wealth, which was returned to the Senate by the Lower House, and recommended that the Senate stick to its former decision on this law. Also Sunday, Upper House Speaker Ahmad Al Lawzi called the Senate for session on Thursday to pursue discussion of issues referred to it.

Ministry attends atomic energy meeting in Tunis

AMMAN (Petra) — A delegation from the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources, headed by the ministry's secretary general Abdul Wabab Al Zuhbi, Monday leaves for Tunis to take part in the meetings of the executive committee of the Arab Atomic Energy Agency (AAEA). Mr. Zuhbi, who is also the chairman of the executive board of the AAEA, said the meeting will discuss a recommendation by a special committee to set up an Arab centre for nuclear sciences in Tunis and a memorandum by the agency's general secretariat on Kuwait's decision not to withdraw from the agency.

Red Crescent head appeals to ICRC

AMMAN (Petra) — President of the Jordan National Red Crescent Society (JNRCS) Mohammad Mideq Al Hadid Sunday urged the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) to protect Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails following news reports that the Israeli government had prepared new regulations for the Israeli security service, Shin Bet, exempting it from responsibility if any prisoner dies during interrogation. In a cable sent to the ICRC head in Geneva Sunday Dr. Hadid said if these regulations were approved by the Israeli government, they will be in violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention calling for protecting civilians living under occupation. Article 31 of the convention, Dr. Hadid said, prohibits any coercion or use of force against people covered by the convention, particularly if the aim was to gain information.

Environment, energy symposium to begin

AMMAN (Petra) — Chairman of the Jordanian Society for the Control of Environmental Pollution Ahmad Obeidat will open a symposium on environment and energy at Amra Hotel's Nabatean Hall. Taking part in the symposium will be 100 participants and institutions, as well as non-governmental organisations concerned with environmental issues. The symposium will shed light on environmental problems resulting from energy and the appropriate methods of using energy. The symposium aims at encouraging the use of alternate sources of energy, such as solar, water and bio-gas. Participants will also discuss uses of nuclear energy and possibilities of using it in Jordan.

Ramtha celebrates illiteracy eradication

RAMTHA (Petra) — The Ramtha district Education Department organised Sunday a celebration at Al Zahra Secondary School making the Arab Day for Illiteracy Eradication. Department Director Atallah Al Doujan delivered an address at the celebration in which he lauded efforts exerted to eradicate illiteracy in the Kingdom. He also underlined the importance of the Ministry of Education's adult education centres and commended their role in curbing illiteracy rates in Jordan. Other speakers also praised the Ministry of Education. The celebration was attended by several district officials and illiteracy eradication centre students and teachers. The number of illiteracy eradication centres in Ramtha district stands at 16, where 350 adult students are registered.

Jordan to discuss ties with Islamic republics

AMMAN (J.T.) — Jordan has recognised the newly independent Islamic republics of the former Soviet Union and will soon appoint non-resident ambassadors to those countries, according to Deputy Premier and Transport Minister Ali Suheimat. Mr. Suheimat, a member of the Jordanian delegation scheduled to leave for Moscow Monday at the start of a tour of Russia and the new Islamic states, said in a statement that the delegation will strive to bolster Jordan's cultural, economic and political relations with these countries.

Mr. Suheimat said Jordan will offer its expertise in various fields to the new states and will open the Al al Baith University in Mafrqa for students from the Islamic republics.

Mr. Suheimat said that the delegation's visit aims primarily at bolstering relations between Jordan and the Islamic republics, adding that the delegation members will hold wide range discussions with government officials in these states.

His Majesty King Hussein Saturday expressed Jordan's desire to build strong ties of cooperation in all fields with the Islamic republics.

The delegation, made up of representatives of various public and private sectors, is led by Chief Chamberlain Prince Raad Ben Zeid.

Amman to host biotech meeting

AMMAN (J.T.) — The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) will hold the second Arab Conference on Perspectives of Modern Biotechnology from April 24 to 28 in Amman.

The conference, jointly called for by ESCWA and the Higher Council for Science and Technology (HCST), in Jordan, aims at enhancing interest in biotechnology-related research and applying and promoting opportunities of biotechnology-based investments.

It will bring together experts and representatives of international institutions and companies with their Arab counterparts as well as parties in charge of biotechnology-related designs, policies and programmes.

During the conference, the participants working in fields related to modern biotechnologies in the Arab countries and abroad will organise an exhibit of products, processes, projects, books and brochures on their relevant activities.

The conference scientific committee has already received more than sixty working documents to be presented during the conference, from the following Arab countries: Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Palestine occupied territories, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Tunisia United Arab Emirates and Yemen.

Thus far documents deal with the applications of biotechnology in agriculture, including tissue cultures; the applications of biotechnology in industrial processes; the applications of biotechnology in environment protection and the treatment of industrial waste; the applications of genetic engineering; the pharmaceutical and medical applications, incentives and obstacles facing the biotechnology-based investment projects in the Arab countries.

Health Ministry announces major expansion of medical facilities, services and staffing

New blood bank opens

AMMAN (Petra) — To its drive to cope with the ever-growing demand on medical services, the Ministry of Health will open six new integrated health centres, 12 clinics, three small health units, 11 dental care centres and 21 mother and child health care centres in the Kingdom during 1993.

The announcement was made Sunday by Minister of Health Aref Bataineh who said leaders have already been announced for the maintenance and development of Al Bashir Hospital in the Ashrafieh district, Al Hussein Hospital in Salt, and Princess Basma Hospital in Irbid.

Dr. Bataineh said the health ministry plans to enlarge Al Ramtha Hospital to include emergency, first aid and laboratory sections, in addition to a blood bank.

He added that the ministry will also start building the 600-bed King Abdullah Training Hospital at the Jordan University of Science and Technology (JUST).

According to Dr. Bataineh, the children's, burn, and orthopaedic sections at Al Bashir Hospital have been enlarged, and 105 new beds have raised the total to 695.

The minister said health centres

in remote regions are being overlooked by nurses who prefer to stay in urban centres.

The ministry is striving to overcome the shortages at these centres where nursing services are below standard, Dr. Bataineh said.

He also said staffing at Jordanian hospitals and health centres is still lacking, particularly in specialised nursing in services including intensive care, care of burn patients and surgeries.

In order to attract specialists and doctors to the health ministry, Dr. Bataineh said that a special "incentives allowance" is being given to physicians and specialists under an agreement announced last August.

He said a committee has been established to determine the nature of work for which a doctor would be entitled to such allowance.

Dr. Bataineh added that daily paid workers employed by the Ministry of Supply and the Amman Municipality will be added to the list of people benefiting from the Ministry of Health's medical services at all health centres and government hospitals shortly.

AMMAN (J.T.) — Under the patronage of His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan a new branch of the National Blood Bank (NBB) in west Amman will open Monday, a statement from the Ministry of Health announced.

Because of the rapid increase of the population in Jordan — particularly during the last two years, the expansion of Amman and an improved health care structure, three new hospitals were opened during 1992 the statement said. Three more hospitals are under construction in west Amman area, it added.

Jordan's medical reputation has attracted patients from neighbouring countries for highly specialised surgical and medical treatment such as open heart surgery, organ transplants and cancer treatment, the statement said.

According to the Ministry of Health, these circumstances necessitate a growing demand for blood and blood products.

In addition the ministry plans to expand its blood transfusion



Aref Bataineh

service and therefore the establishment of a new branch of the NBB in west Amman is paramount, the statement said.

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) is helping to finance the project at a cost of about \$450,000, the ministry said.

According to the statement, U.S. aid assistance includes pro-

viding a modern mobile unit which will help increase blood collections from donors across the country, as well as equipment, computers, and staff training in certain areas of blood banking.

The government of Jordan will provide the new branch with trained staff from the ministry's National Blood Bank, and cover operating costs without reducing the current budgetary allocation for the NBB the statement said.

According to the ministry, the new branch operate under the same regulations and with the same high standards and quality control of the NBB.

The main function of this branch will be to collect blood from healthy donors following appropriate laboratory and medical examinations, the statement said.

The blood will then be sent to the National Blood Bank for processing into components, testing for infectious diseases and conforming blood group, and other necessary tests, the ministry added.

Kabariti hopes labour meeting will renew Arab cooperation

AMMAN (J.T.) — Minister of Labour Abdul Karim Al Kabariti Sunday expressed hope that the upcoming Arab Labour Organisation (ALO) conference due to convene in Amman the first week of April, might help to rekindle solidarity among Arab countries and renew cooperation in labour-related fields.

In a preparatory meeting at the ministry with ALO Director General Baker Mahmoud Rasoul, Mr. Kabariti said Jordan will participate in the conference with a delegation of representatives from the Ministry of Labour and the employers and the workers unions.

The conference agenda includes issues such as working women and their role to development, the role of women in Islam and their status in Arab legislation, the Arab strategy for recruitment and integration of the Arab labour force.

In addition, the integration of the disabled and their employment in jobs suitable to their capabilities, the working environment, occupational health and safety, and freedom of labour to



Abdul Karim Al Kabariti

the Arab World, are also part of the conference agenda, he said.

Mr. Kabariti and Mr. Rasoul reviewed the agenda and the composition of the participating delegations, means of ensuring the success of the forthcoming conference.

A delegation accompanying Mr. Rasoul was present at the meeting.

RJ maintenance services to earn millions in fees

AMMAN (J.T.) — Royal Jordanian (RJ), the national air carrier, Sunday announced that its aircraft maintenance facility will earn it millions of dollars for services to airlines operating in the region.

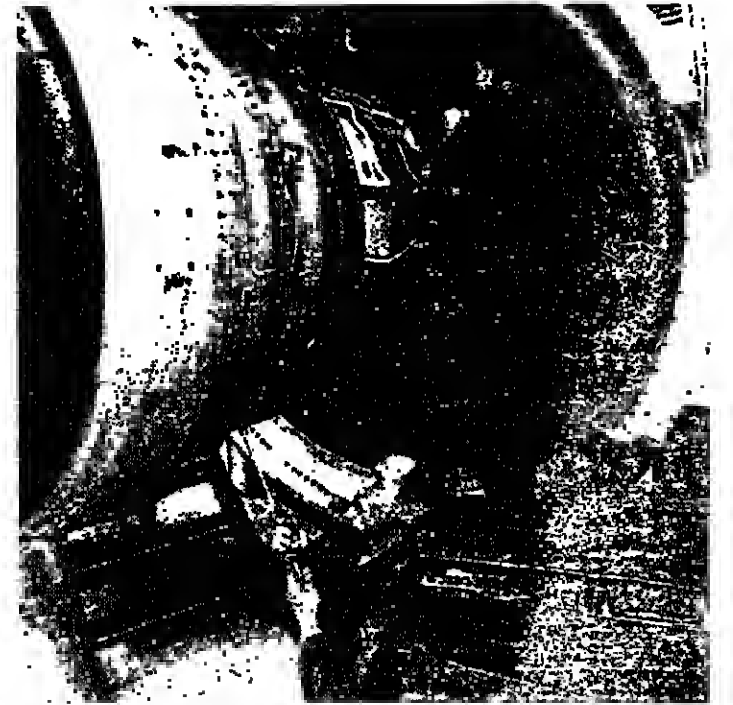
An RJ press release said at least \$4 million were expected shortly adding that the airline's servicing facility at Queen Alia International Airport (QAIA) has witnessed a growing demand for services on aircraft bodies and engines of international carriers "Four Pratt Whitney engines owned by Algerian Airways, a similar engine from Air France and another from Aljazeera, the South Yemen airline, arrived early this year for checking, the statement said.

Fees for servicing these engines alone should bring revenues of \$1 million, RJ said.

Egypt Air and Egyptian ZAS Airline have concluded an engine servicing agreement with RJ. The engines are due in Amman in the coming two months, the press release said.

It said RJ is also negotiating with the Lebanese Middle East Airlines (MEA) and Syrian Airways on similar service agreements.

Maintenance work is nearing completion on the bodies of an Aljazeera Boeing 727 and a Boeing 707 owned by Comtran, a U.S. firm, the statement said. Service and maintenance has been conducted by RJ on planes



Royal Jordanian's maintenance facility at Queen Alia Airport provides services to numerous international airlines (File photo)

and engines owned by French, Canadian Sri Lanka, Cypriot, Yemeni, Algerian, Egyptian, Sudanese and Syrian airlines, in addition to U.S. Seagreen and Buffalo airlines.

Royal Jordanian recently reported highly successful operations during 1992, after overcoming the negative consequences of the Gulf crisis and the world economic recession.

RJ President and Chief Executive Officer Mahmoud Balqez told an RJ marketing conference in December last year that the airline's revenues came to nearly JD 253 million; an 18 per cent increase over 1991 figures.

WHAT'S GOING ON

★ Exhibition entitled "Modernist Still Life Photographed" at the American Centre.

★ Exhibition of watercolour paintings by Syrian artist Nazir Nab'a at Baladina Art Gallery.

★ Exhibition of paintings by the late Syrian artist Alfred Hatmal at Al Balqa Art Gallery in Fuhis city.

★ Exhibition of paintings by four Arab artists from the United States — Ghada Jamal, Helen Khal, Saba Noursi and Afaf Zayyih — at the Abdul Hammed Shoman Foundation Gallery in Jabel Amman, between the First and Second Circles.

★ Exhibition of photographs by Jean-Philippe Reverdot at the French Cultural Centre.

SEMINAR

★ English language seminar entitled "Teacher Support and Self-evaluation by Teachers" at the British Council at 5:30 p.m.

FILM

★ French film entitled "L'Amoureuse" at 8 p.m. at the French Cultural Centre (96 min., 1987)

'Lost passport' notices — a way out for many 'illegals'

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Notices of "lost" Indian passports appearing in the Jordan Times come mostly in line with a directive by the embassy of India in Amman to Indians approaching the mission seeking new passports to replace lost documents.

Such advertisements, which announce the loss of passports and request finders to contact the police or the embassy of India, have appeared with increasing frequency in the Jordan Times in the past three years, particularly after the authorities stepped up measures against illegal guest workers in the Kingdom.

The rationale behind the embassy directive to passport applicants that they put an advertisement in the newspaper as a precondition for the acceptance of their applications is multi-fold: it fulfils a basic requirement under the regulations of the Indian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and informs concerned people that the passport has been re-

ported lost.

In many cases the embassy received the "lost" passports from the Jordanian immigration authorities a few days after the advertisements appeared. The authorities reported that the documents were seized during raids on groups which operate a lucrative trade of furnishing work and residence permits — in some cases forged documents — to illegal guest workers.

There have also been dozens of cases where the passports have disappeared altogether; either the documents were actually lost or someone suppressed them somewhere.

Inquiries made by the Jordan Times reveal that:

— during the early eighties the business of furnishing residence and work permits for Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Sri Lankan nationals boomed with a high demand for foreign labour in Jordan. Some organised groups were specialised in securing the relatively, easily available permission to employ foreign labour in the agricultural sector.

The catch was that while a foreigner may hold a residence permit showing him as a farm worker, he may actually be working in some other trade which is not permitted by the local authorities.

Holders of such documents annually renewed their papers without much fear of detection in the early eighties. The groups which helped them used to charge them anything between JD 70 to JD 150 per head for the renewals.

But the authorities grew wiser to the game and launched a concerted drive to put an end to it in the late '80s.

Many groups were raided and hundreds of passports seized during searches on their premises. Thousands of Asian workers employed in sectors which are not authorised by the Ministry of Labour were exposed and ordered out or deported.

"Many of those who are now reporting lost passports are the remnants of those illegal workers," said an informed source.

"They managed to elude the authorities so far, but they always faced the problem of how to leave

the country even with a passport since they had incurred hundreds, if not thousands, as penalties for overstaying their residence permits or visa."

In a few cases, sources say, some managed to leave the country on stolen passports and related residence documents.

"Such departures are possible for people from certain distinct regions of India," commented one source. "Their features are almost undistinguishable and therefore most of them can pass for one another at immigration points."

Guest workers caught by the authorities face deportation; in such cases the penalties are waived and the concerned diplomatic mission arranges for their passage home. Hundreds surrendered to the authorities to avail themselves of the exemption from the penalty and were deported.

But those who remained behind without proper documents for their work and stayed in Jordan had no option but to pay the penalty.

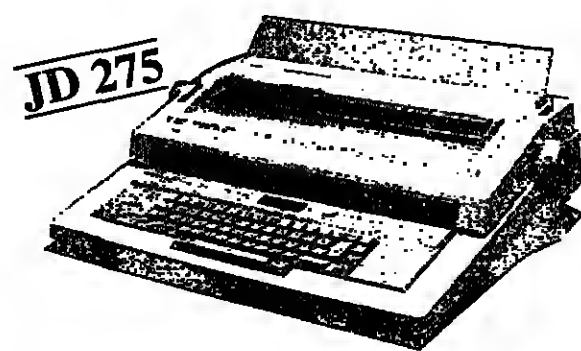
The Department of Foreigners Affairs at the Ministry of Interior reported a total of 1,950 residence permits — either renewed or issued for the first time — granted to Indian nationals in 1992.

But informed sources say that several hundred remained without any permit during the year. "If they were to approach the authorities for proper work and residence permit, then they faced the prospect of paying several hundred dinars as work permit charges in addition to a huge sum as penalty for overstaying," said one source. "Very few of them had the money to do that."

With the general amnesty granted by His Majesty King Hussein on Nov. 14, those who have overstayed their permits have to pay the JD 1 per-day penalty only for the period after the date of the amnesty since all previous penalties were cancelled by the royal gesture.

Many have already taken advantage of the amnesty and left the country.

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Jordan Times

An independent Arab political daily published in English by the Jordan Press Foundation.
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MOHAMMAD AMAD

Editor-in-Chief:

GEORGE S. HAWATMEH

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Jordan Press Foundation,

University Road, P.O. Box 6710, Amman, Jordan.

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Telex: 21497 ALRAI JO

Facsimile: 661242

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Frosty grip of ice

ACCORDING TO the latest weather reports from the Department of Meteorology, rain and snow will again hit Jordan beginning "Monday night." This is both good and bad news. Good because Jordan can still use more rain to replenish its reservoirs and irrigate its land. The bad news, however, is that many people will exploit the new snowstorm to close shop and sit at home, decreasing productivity and straining resources due to increased consumption. This is exactly what happened last week when life in the Kingdom came to a near standstill when the first flakes of snow fell. Not only were schools closed then but so were most public services, including many supermarkets, car garages, and even restaurants.

In a way, our people are to blame for showing panic unnecessarily, especially when they begin to hoard foodstuffs as if their stay at home will be forever. It is as if snowfall, even when light, has become a licence to stop work activities. On the other hand, though, the government has been contributing to this unfortunate state of affairs not only by encouraging stoppage practically at every conceivable level but also by not doing enough to keep all arteries of the country open and safe for transportation.

If last week's demonstration by the concerned authorities is anything to go by, many streets in the capital and other snow bound cities will this time be impassable or unsafe. The public cannot be expected to take incalculable risks and drive to work as long as the public sector confines its activities to only highways and thoroughfares, leaving streets and avenues untouched by machinery or salt. There is an abundance of cheap salt, which is actually also not fit for human consumption, that can be easily used to melt accumulating snow and prevent dangerous ice from forming on the roads. Since snow has become almost a regular feature of winter in Jordan, we would have thought that by now the authorities would be better prepared for all-weather possibilities.

Jordanians need encouragement not to close their offices and shops and go home at the first sight of blizzards and snow storms. But they cannot be blamed for paying most attention and giving priority to their own children's safety and well-being when the bureaucracy does not do its homework. There is a tremendous economic cost to the country every time it halts its activities because of bad weather, and this cost far exceeds any expense of the central government when preparing all official departments to cope with emergencies. It would be worthwhile to consider the possibility of more snow falling in the weeks ahead, and in coming winters, and to plan for "no stoppage" campaigns when rain turns into snow and snow into ice on our mountain slopes.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

AL RA'I Arabic daily described Israel's killing of Palestinians in the Gaza Strip Saturday as another link in the chain of atrocities that began with the expulsion of the 415 Palestinians to southern Lebanon. No doubt that Israel is being encouraged in its drive to pursue aggressive acts against the Palestinian people by the U.S. stand and the absence of sanctions imposed by the U.N. Security Council on the Jewish state's failure to comply with Resolution 799, the paper said. It said that by pursuing its inhuman practices and crimes in the occupied lands, Israel is trying to push the Arab parties away from the negotiating table and away from the peace process altogether. The paper said that in two days, the Israelis murdered six Palestinians, four of whom fell Saturday alone under the eyes of the world community which is doing nothing to come to the help of the oppressed people. Encouraged by the United States and condoned for its action by the Security Council, the Israelis will no doubt continue to commit crimes, the paper continued. One should not be surprised if Washington takes a step to reward Israel for its aggression and its continued disregard of the U.N. resolutions, the paper said. The killing of the Palestinians came close on the heels of a sinister deal between Israel and the United States which manifested itself first by an open Israeli defiance of the U.N. resolution, the paper added. The paper expressed apprehension of a new trend in American policy designed to further subdue the Arab parties and force them to go to the negotiations against their will, regardless of the fate of the Palestinians deported to southern Lebanon. A COLUMNIST in Al Ra'i daily said that if Washington feels unable to force Israel to implement U.N. Security Council Resolution 799, it could never be able to force it to implement the previous resolutions. Tareq Masarweh said that Washington has to date failed to demand that Israel pull out of a single inch of southern Lebanon, in accordance with Resolution 425, nor did the U.S. ask Israel to ever stop killing Palestinian children and demolish Palestinian homes. At the same time, Washington seeks to end the Arab states' boycott of Israel, ensure Arab states' recognition of the Jewish state, make Arab forget about their usurped and occupied lands and capitulate to Israel's will, he said. With this state of affairs, Washington is not eligible to play a mediation role to end the Arab-Israeli conflict and, being totally biased towards Israel, there can be no point for Washington to send Warren Christopher to the Middle East, he added. The writer expressed belief that the ongoing peace talks could never achieve progress, even if they continued for 10 years, simply because Israel does not intend to give up occupied Arab land nor is Washington interested in such a development. It is regrettable, said the writer, to see Arab leaders declaring that they had reached the point of no return in the peace talks with Israel at a time when the Arab leaders hear loud and clear Mr. Rabin's threatening the Arabs with pulling out of the negotiations should they not "save" his own way and should he be reprimanded by the Security Council for not complying with its resolutions.

Weekly Political Pulse

Israel-PLO negotiations are ineluctable

Although Israel's Labour-led government still insists on not dealing with the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) directly, even after repealing its 1986 law banning contacts with the Palestinian organisation, there are solid reasons to believe that Israel is fast reconciling itself with the inevitability of negotiating with the PLO sooner rather than later. Till this point in time, the Israeli political machine has yielded only to the logic of talking with the Palestinian organisation in an indirect way, having recognised that its Palestinian interlocutors at the negotiating table are for all intents and purposes genuine PLO representatives. What keeps Israel from plunging deeper into the reality of the Palestinian equation could be only a tactical move aimed at extracting more concessions from the Palestinians.

What could accelerate the Israeli movement in the direction of according the PLO full recognition is the emergence of the Hamas faction as a fast growing political and military force in the West Bank and Gaza Strip over the past few years. Israel was the first to recognise that Hamas' advancement was at the expense of other Palestinian PLO groupings, especially the centre and left of centre factions. Against this backdrop, Israel is faced with two alternatives: Either to play ball with the moderate Palestinian elements or risk leaving the field wide open to the rising fundamentalist organisations. The timing for rescinding the 1986 law outlawing contacts with the PLO suggests that indeed Israel is labouring on the premise that shunning the PLO as such would only play into the hands of Hamas in particular.

It can be presumed therefore that in the course of the upcoming

months, if not weeks, more Israeli moves will be taken to realise full Israeli-PLO dialogue. Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat is the only Arab leader in the post-Camp David era that is on record as calling for direct peace negotiations at the highest possible level. Mr. Arafat even proposed to visit Israel, something that no other Arab head of state has found acceptable to do at this stage of the negotiating process. What is holding Israel from responding to such Palestinian peace overtures is something that only time will resolve. It is more probable than not, however, that the point will be soon arrived at as Israel inches ever closer to direct contacts with the PLO.

What is also helping advance the PLO as a full-fledged player in the peace parleys is Jordan's refusal to replace the Palestinian organisation. His Majesty King Hussein has made it clear over and over again that he will not negotiate on behalf of the Palestinians even though considerable Palestinian constituencies would have hoped that he does. King Hussein's stance on this issue has been driven by one simple concern, and that is to help elevate the PLO to the role of full player in the peace process. The 1987 decision to break legal relations with the West Bank was also motivated by the national verdict that, on balance, it would be better for all sides to let the Palestinians speak for themselves and through their political institution, the PLO. Israel is inching closer to this conclusion and it is only a matter of time before the Labour-led government yields to the logic and momentum of this universally-held consensus: That in order to bind all future Palestinian generations to the projected Palestinian-Israeli peace

it would be advantageous to earn the agreement and blessing of the PLO in particular.

Yet, Jordan's role will continue to be central and critical. Jordan has thus far provided an artificial umbrella that facilitated the Palestinians' active involvement in the peace process right from the start in the face of Israel's objections to talk peace with them on equal footing with the other parties to the peace talks. In addition, Jordan is still poised to facilitate the success of a pivotal Israeli-Palestinian negotiations by agreeing to entertain a pivotal role in the implementation of any agreed upon peace treaty between them. This could take the form of federation with the Palestinian political structure that is anticipated to emerge from the peace parleys. Such an arrangement would not only make any future Palestinian political infrastructures in the West Bank and Gaza Strip viable politically but also economically.

What the future holds for the region in terms of wider economic associations, bringing more Middle Eastern states together in one large common market, is something that is open for conjecture at this point in time. Yet the prospects are there to emulate other regions of the world by creating a regional economic market that can withstand the competition of other regions of the world. In spite of the existing frustrations and setbacks over the seemingly anemic peace negotiations, whether on the bilateral or multilateral levels, there is a clear peace momentum that will continue to move forward, generated by its own inertia. This is the logic of contemporary history and the spirit of the new era in international relations.

Gaza children live and die under the gun

By Sara Helm

As dusk falls in Jabalia refugee camp in the Israeli-occupied Gaza Strip, two Palestinian women, one pregnant, one holding the hand of a child, begin to traverse a stretch of wasteland.

They have emerged from a line of refugee shacks and are heading for a United Nations health centre. A maternity clinic is about to begin, and they are taking advantage of a lull in the shooting.

For the women are not alone on the stage. At the rear are the Israeli army lookout posts and a wire fence, shielding a military camp. Soldiers are crouching against the walls of the clinic, holding M-16 rifles trained on a large crowd of children who have gathered for the evening's entertainment, throwing stones at Israeli soldiers.

To reach the clinic the women must pass directly between the soldiers and the children, in front of the line of fire, less than 15 metres from the guns. A shot rings out, and the women, now bending low, break into a difficult run, reaching the clinic doors unhurt. But the crowd of children is suddenly swarming, and an ambulance rushes out, picking up the victim of the gunfire and driving back to the clinic.

Now a group of older children — aged 15 perhaps — clutching their stones, have climbed on to the clinic roof, directly above the soldiers, who are bolt upright, stiff with fear. More shots follow, then big clouds of smoke appear.

"Gas, gas, gas." Some children run in fear, many yelp with excitement. Little ones hold hands, tears streaming down faces, shirts pulled up over mouths. They swarm back into the camp, into the tiny alleyways where the tear gas will sting them less. The faces are suddenly still, turned up to the fading lights as they wait and listen. None here looks older than 14, and many seem as young as four or five. The only sound now is choking or vomiting, mostly from young women with babies who have also run to the alleys from their homes nearer the gas.

In the last two months children have been killed and injured in



Gaza in unprecedented numbers. Statistics prepared by UNRWA, the U.N. relief agency in Gaza and the West Bank, show that of the 28 Palestinians killed by Israelis in Gaza since the beginning of December, 10 were children under the age of 16; nine were shot by soldiers, one by a settler.

This is more in two months than in any full year since the

start of the intifada in 1987. Between Dec. 2 and Jan. 23, 182 children were treated in UNRWA clinics or local hospitals after being shot with live ammunition, defined as 5.56 calibre bullets with metal or plastic tips. Several more children were injured by plastic-coated metal marbles, fired in sprays of up to 12, or by severe beating or by being struck by tear gas canisters.

The number of injuries above the abdomen led to reports, strongly denied by the army, that open-fire regulations, which say shots should be fired at legs first, had been relaxed. The death on Dec. 19 of 10-year-old Rana Abu Tuour, shot dead by a sniper in Khan Younis camp as she left home to buy milk, first highlighted the killings. This week the

military governor of Khan Younis called the family to his office. "He said he apologised. He said they shot Rana by mistake," said her mother. But no explanation was given, no inquest report, no compensation.

Whether the open-fire regulations have changed or not, it is easy to see why the deaths happen. There are a lot of very nervous soldiers in Gaza. The

killings in December of three soldiers by Palestinian gunmen heightened tension which has since been fuelled by fear of retaliation for Israel's deportation of 415 suspected Islamic militants, many from Gaza.

A frightened Israeli soldier, posted to Gaza, has little training or experience to fall back on when intimidated by crowds of taunting children. There is no riot shield, no truncheon. He holds a gun and his first defence is to shoot. Whatever the rules, wherever he shoots in Gaza he will puncture a wall of children. Children flock everywhere. Some 800,000 Palestinians live here, more than half in refugee camps.

In the early days of the intifada parents tried to keep their children off the streets. It was the older youths who were seen, throwing the stones in clashes with the army. But as the intifada spread, the children took directions less from their parents and more from the street leadership. Their only heroes now are the masked men, and children scan results of clashes posted to mosque walls like children elsewhere scan football scores. Now the average age of the stone-throwing activist is 13. The older youths are either killed or directing events, having given up the stone for the gun.

Inside the U.N. clinic Dr. Salim Ramadan updates his medical records. He marks a spot on the drawing of a body, describes the injury, and ticks either LA (live ammunition) or PB (plastic bullet). On Jan. 16, when 11-year-old Shireen Hussein was killed outside the clinic on her way to school, he marked a spot on the abdomen and ticked LA. This time he ticks LA but marks a spot on the leg. The 15-year-old boy shot this time was lucky.

Outside, pockets of children are still shouting taunts at the soldiers in Hebrew getting closer to the wire. "Chicken chicken. Drop your gun and fight me." The maternity clinic is getting under way — The Independent.

Tough question for Clinton administration: Intervene abroad?

By David Briscoe
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Clinton administration wants to focus on domestic issues, but foreign conflicts keep intruding.

Advocates on all sides of foreign disputes, members of Congress and other experts are pushing and pulling the new administration to take a stand — or avoid action — in various conflicts.

During his first two weeks in office, President Clinton took no new foreign policy initiatives. He did not indicate whether he will commit U.S. troops or other resources to deal with crises inherited from President Bush in Haiti, Somalia, the Midwest, former Yugoslavia and elsewhere.

His rejection of Haitian boat people, the slow withdrawal of troops in Somalia, the standoff in Iraq and his announced plan to dispatch Secretary of State Warren Christopher to the Middle East all represent a cautious continuation of Bush policies.

Even his administration's tough questioning of a proposed peace plan for the Bosnian conflict in former Yugoslavia is being viewed by some as a reluctance to commit to any increased U.S. role abroad. Acceptance of the plan by diplomats Cyrus Vance and Lord Owen could lead to a commitment of U.S. troops to ensure that it works.

As a candidate, Mr. Clinton said he supported stronger action than Mr. Bush in the Yugoslav conflict. As president, Mr. Clinton has yet to commit to any course of action.

The latest issue of the prestigious journal Foreign Affairs includes articles debating when, where and why the United States should intervene in other nations' affairs.

The question is no longer the simple cold war issue of promoting democracy abroad against Soviet communism. Without the Soviet threat, the United States has to find a new set of criteria for intervention.

"The United States will have to sort out and select its political objectives and the means it employs to achieve them far better than it has," said former Defence Secretary James Schlesinger in one article.

The post-cold war world "is becoming more rather than less anarchic," says Mr. Schlesinger. "The United States is not called upon to, nor can it, cure all the world's misery," he says.

Both Mr. Clinton and former President Bush have taken similar positions. But both also have left room for unilateral U.S. military action when necessary.

Mr. Bush committed U.S. troops in Panama, Iraq and Somalia, and Mr. Clinton said in his inaugural address: "When our vital interests are challenged, or

the will and conscience of the international community is defied, we will act — with peaceful diplomacy whenever possible, with force when necessary."

Stephen John Stedman, assistant professor at Johns Hopkins University, says in another Foreign Affairs article, that a "new interventionism" is emerging, which seeks to end civil wars and stop government from abusing their peoples.

Mr. Stedman says Mr. Clinton is sympathetic with such goals but must be realistic, intervening only when it is in America's interest.

Intervention "applied according to the dictates of television, rather than the national interest of the United States" will likely lead to an era that is "more confrontational, conflict-ridden and violent than the one that preceded it," Mr. Stedman says in the article.

Much of the debate has focused on the degree to which the United States should participate in collective enforcement of international goals with the United Nations and other multilateral organisations.

Analysts at the conservative Heritage Foundation were critical of the Bush administration for imposing self-restrictions on its foreign involvement by following United Nations, North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) and World Bank goals.

"The United States should use coalitions with a keener eye toward protecting and preserving U.S. interests," said Kim Holmes, a Heritage vice president and defence policy analyst.

He said the Clinton administration will face a number of temptations to get involved abroad. The Somalia intervention, he said, "has muddled the discussion of the relationship between force and interest," since the United States intervened to help feed Somalia rather than to protect clear U.S. interests.

A report by a high-level commission on U.S. foreign policy issued during the transition from Mr. Bush to Mr. Clinton concluded: "We will inevitably rely more and more on collective security to cope with new military challenges — or they will not be dealt with at all."

The commission, headed by Winston Lord, now Mr. Clinton's assistant secretary of state for Asia, noted that at times the collapse of elected governments may be inevitable and that international pressure may inflict unacceptable hardship on a people.

"But as a general rule," it concluded, "the United States should join other nations to impose punitive measures on countries whose democratic governments have been toppled by military coups or suspended by the national leadership."

LETTERS

799 now!

To the Editor:

On Jan. 20, 1993, Bill Clinton was inaugurated as the 42nd president of the United States of America. To many, the new administration is a breath of fresh air compared to the one led by former President George Bush. Or is it?

During the elections and throughout the campaign then Governor Clinton reiterated his position, time and again, that his foreign policy would be no different from the one of the Bush administration regarding the Middle East conflict, and the ongoing Arab-Israeli peace talks.

The double standard the U.S. is using in regard to U.N. Security Council resolutions targeted against Iraq and Israel is unprecedented. The U.S. is stalling any U.N. Security Council meetings to deal with the Palestinian deportees, alleging that more peaceful actions should get underway, before any sanctions are taken against Israel.

Security Council resolutions should be implemented with no double vision in mind. Is this what the so-called new world order former President Bush called for is all about? Enforcing U.N. resolutions on Iraq, and only Iraq, for something that has happened and is done with, and not enforcing them on a nation that commits atrocities on daily basis seems to be a trait of this new world order.

Israel should not think for one moment that its practices are accepted by the world body; it should realise that aggression will not go unpunished, regardless of who Israel is hiding behind. I think that the Arabs should use their powers on the right people to make them pressure Israel to enforce Resolution 799 and to take all the deportees back.

Samer Farraj,
P.O. Box 5225,
Amman.

The Jordan Times welcomes letters and contributions from its readers on any subject they wish to tackle. Letters intended for publication, however, should contain the writer's full name and preferably address as well. Names can be withheld only upon request and under special circumstances. Letters are subject to editing. The newspaper is not responsible for the return of unused manuscripts.

هكذا من الأمل

House rejects

(Continued from page 1)

and the history of the Hashemites. Muslim Brotherhood Deputy Hamam Spid refused the argument that Jordan has to comply with the resolutions of the Security Council because the Jews are refusing to implement J.N. resolutions.

Reminding deputies that violating international law is an act that provokes international punishment, Deputy Abdul Majid Shreideh noted the lack of such legislation in the Charter of the Arab League.

Mr. Shreideh pointed to Iraq's compliance with Security Council resolutions, and said that the proposed law would harm national interests.

"(This proposed law) deals with politics through slogans at the expense of national interests," he said.

Asserting that international law is the law of the United States and Israel, Deputy Hussein Mijali said Jordan must respect what he called "a national charter" according to which, he said, aggression on one Arab state is an aggression on the whole Arab Nation.

"Our frustration with Arab division and national regression should not lead us to hurt ourselves," Deputy Lebnan by the Israeli government in December, the foreign affairs and Palestine and occupied Arab territories committees of the House Sunday proposed that the House initiate joint Arab parliamentary action to emphasize the need for implementing Resolution 799.

The House adopted the committee's recommendation.

The committees also proposed that the House form a delegation to seek the formation of an Arab parliamentary group that would visit the European Parliament and other international organizations in an effort to urge the implementation of Resolution 799.

The House also endorsed a general pardon issued by King Hussein in November as presented by government despite arguments that the draft law was unconstitutional.

Mr. Mijali said it was unconstitutional to issue temporary general pardon laws when the House was not sitting because the penalty code says "the House is the constitutional authority to initiate such legislation."

"The draft law is null and void and that should be made public," Mr. Mijali said, adding that only private pardons can be issued if the House is not in session. He said issuing a temporary general pardon law gives the people affected by it acquired rights that cannot be later revoked, thus "confiscating" the right of the House to reject the law.

Mr. Fagie rejected the argument saying that the House could still amend the draft law after it was issued. He said the emergency situation that the Constitution says gives the King the right to issue a temporary draft law on general pardon was present in the country when the pardon was issued.

The House, which will hold its next meeting Wednesday, also agreed to raise to 16 the membership of a committee formed by the House last week to investigate alleged nepotism and favoritism in civil service appointments.

Arguing against the proposal, Deputy Ali Al Bawaid said it was unconstitutional to force citizens to cast their votes in parliamentary elections.

He said it was people's right and not duty to vote, adding that the proposed law would amount to an encroachment on personal freedoms.

Other deputies who opposed the proposal cited difficulties in implementing the proposed law as a reason for rejecting it. Instead of forcing people to vote, efforts should be centered on educating them on the need to exercise their constitutional right to vote, they said.

Advocates of the law argued that the Constitution names the people as the source of authority and they must therefore cast their votes in order to ensure that the views of the majority are considered.

"How could we ensure that (Parliament) represents the people if only 30 per cent of eligible voters cast their votes," said Mr. Mijali.

Islamist deputies were particularly opposed to the motion on the grounds that a mandatory voting law was impossible to implement and would infringe on personal freedoms. These deputies enjoy high turnout in their constituencies and many observers say a higher turnout of voters would reduce the number of seats the Islamic movement has in the House.

According to one deputy, a recent study has shown that if voter turnout "is nine per cent higher than" that of the 1989 elections there will be a 50 per cent change in the composition of the House. The study, said the deputy, did not specify which political trends will benefit or lose from the projected change. No further information on the study or who conducted it was available.

Expressing support for the nearly 400 Palestinian expatriates in Lebanon by the Israeli government in December, the foreign affairs and Palestine and occupied Arab territories committees of the House Sunday proposed that the House initiate joint Arab parliamentary action to emphasize the need for implementing Resolution 799.

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Israel says expulsion policy remains

(Continued from page 1)

erate than Mr. Rabin. "Israel accepted it. Now we have to let the United States implement it."

Mr. Peres said he saw no need for fresh "concessions" to ensure

that Middle East peace talks convene in April as hoped.

"What am I, a hawk of compromises," said an agitated Peres, who leaves on Wednesday

for talks with Clinton administration officials in Washington.

"The United States took it upon itself to overcome this matter with the proposal it suggested and Israel accepted this proposal," he said.

U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher, who plans a Middle East tour this month, had been

anxious for a compromise that would defuse the evictee crisis and allow fresh Middle East peace talks.

Cabinet Secretary Elyakim Rubinstein, who leads Israeli negotiations with the Palestinians at the peace talks, said after the cabinet meeting there was no change in the U.S.-brokered

agreement.

The evictees have vowed not to leave their camp until all are allowed to return.

Palestinians attending the peace talks have emphasized that they want to continue, but they say popular pressure in the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip makes that impossible before the

return of all evictees.

Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat has reiterated his rejection of the U.S.-brokered deal.

He also said remarks by Mr. Rabin threatening to expel hundreds more Palestinians did not encourage a compromise settlement to the dispute.

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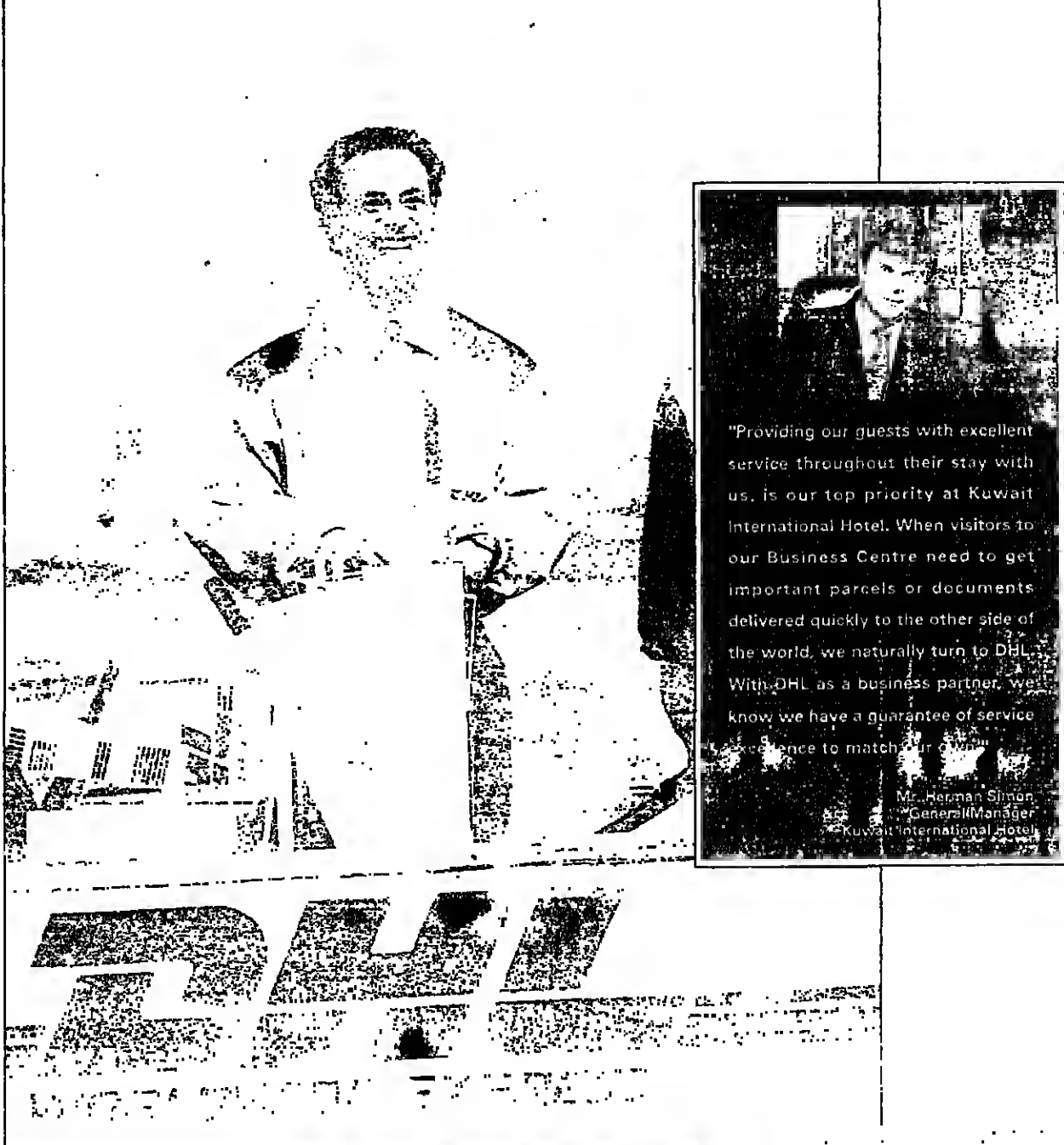
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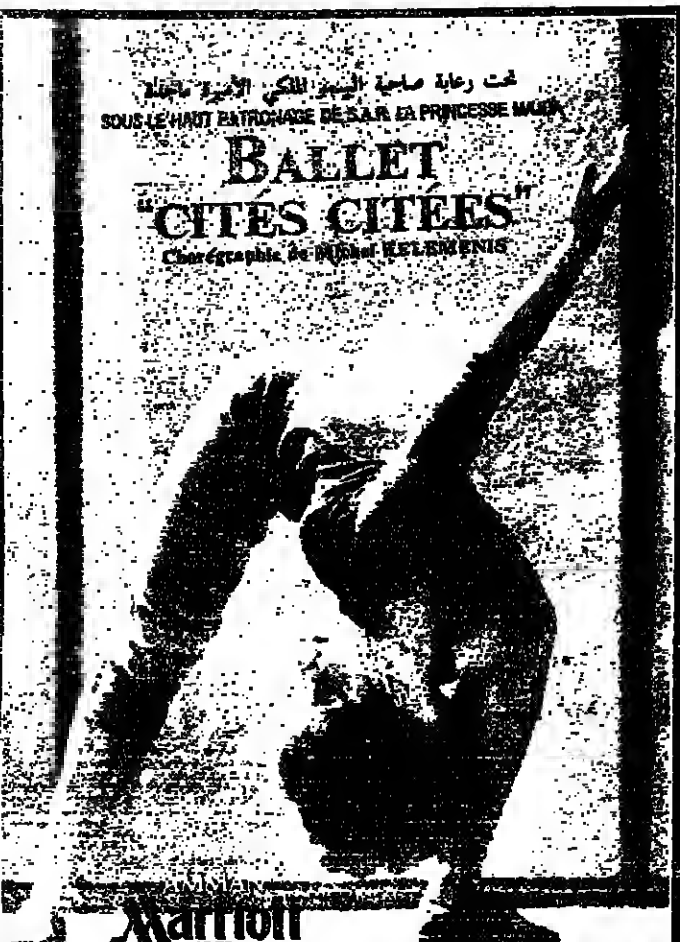
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Clashes continue in Croatia; Bosnia relief flights suspended

BELGRADE (R) — Croatian and rebel Serb forces exchanged rocket and shell fire along the Adriatic coastal hinterland Sunday and fighting flared in several areas of Bosnia as international peace efforts faltered.

Sirens sounded the alert at dawn in the ports of Zadar and Biograd, only a few kilometres away from a new "blue line" war front established after Croatian forces launched their Jan. 22 offensive to regain areas of the Serb-held Krajina enclave.

Relief flights from the Croatian capital of Zagreb to the Serb-besieged Bosnian capital of Sarajevo were suspended for at least a day after a German plane was hit by anti-aircraft fire over northern Croatia Saturday and a crewman injured.

Foreign airlines also halted their flights to Zagreb Sunday for security reasons.

U.N. Secretary-General Boutros Ghali condemned Saturday's attack on the relief plane, saying it "further jeopardised the international community's efforts to bring an end to the conflict."

Seventeen other UNHCR flights made the trip to and from Sarajevo without incident.

UNHCR officials in Sarajevo said it was up to their head office in Geneva to decide when the flights would resume and whether they should be re-routed or based somewhere other than Zagreb.

"It's quite clear this route is risky," one official said.

Rebel Serbs have rejected a call for talks to end the Krajina fighting and said they will not talk peace until Croatian troops meet U.N. demands to withdraw from areas they have seized since Jan. 22.

Residents said the shelling around Zadar and Biograd died down during the day but few people were on the streets.

Croatian radio reported at least seven rocket attacks on Croatian villages inland from Zadar and said a Serb tank was destroyed by counter-fire. A heavy barrage was heard near Biograd as Croatian forces appeared to be firing at Serb-held areas with multiple rocket launchers.

The radio said Serb gunners shelled the Adriatic town of Sibenik Saturday for the first time in seven months, an ominous sign that fighting in Croatia could be spreading. No casualties were reported.

The radio also reported steady Serb mortar and small arms fire in Krupanj, Fridraga, Islam Laski and Dracevac.

In Bosnia, intensive fighting was reported along the eastern border with Serbia between pro-government Muslim forces and Bosnian Serb militias.

Rival Serbs and Muslims in Bosnia have rebuffed a peace plan by U.N. and European Community mediators which would divide the republic into 10 provinces, largely on ethnic lines.

Radio stations said there had been infantry and tank clashes and heavy shelling in northern areas along a land corridor from Serbia which is the main supply route to Serb-held areas of Bosnia and Croatia.

In central Bosnia-Herzegovina, skirmishes were reported between once-allied Croatian and Muslim troops fighting for control of communally-mixed areas.

Sarajevo, where 380,000 people have been trapped since the war began last April, was gener-

ally quiet except for some exchanges of cannon fire.

In New York, international mediators portrayed this weekend as the last chance for Bosnia's Serbs and Muslims to sign up to peace package before the U.N. Security Council is asked to impose a solution.

But Bosnian President Alija Izetbegovic said in Sarajevo that the plan legitimised the brutal practice of "ethnic cleansing" — violent and wholesale communal expulsion — by rebel Serbs.

"The plan in its present form, we shall not sign. It must be corrected," he told reporters.

Mediators Cyrus Vance and Lord Owen have struggled since September to end the conflict among Bosnia's Serbs, Croats and Muslims which has killed more than 16,000 people and forced two million from their homes.

The Serbs in Croatia rose up after the republic declared independence from Yugoslavia in June 1991. Most fighting stopped in January last year under a U.N.-mediated truce. Bosnia's minority Serbs revolted after the republic declared independence last March.

The Security Council, meeting in closed consultations Monday for the first time since Mr. Vance and Lord Owen transferred the peace talks from Geneva to New York, is nearly as divided as the Bosnians. No action is expected until after the United States reveals its full position.

"We're going to try and put together a package. Sometime the middle of next week, look for something," U.S. Defence Secretary Les Aspin said en route to Munich where he went to meet

British, French and German military leaders on President Bill Clinton's initial proposals for ending the war.

Britain, France, Russia and China support the Vance-Owen peace plan but other Security Council states have reservations, including Islamic council members, Pakistan, Morocco and Djibouti.

In the weekend talks at the United Nations involving Bosnia's Muslims, Serbs and Croats, meeting separately with Mr. Vance and Lord Owen, no progress was discernible.

"The odds of (the talks) succeeding went down somewhat as a result of their discussions," said U.N. spokesman Fred Eckhard.

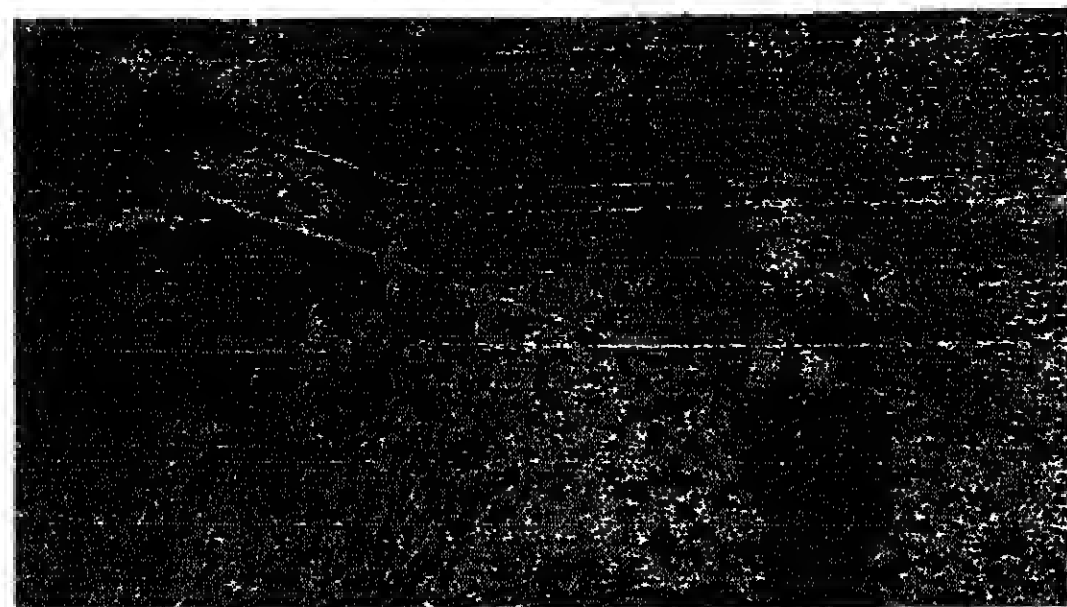
At the heart of the peace plan is a contentious map dividing the country into 10 semi-autonomous provinces — three dominated by Serbs, three by Muslims, two by Croats and two expected to have a tri-partite local government.

Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic brought a new map into the meeting which would cut the country further along ethnic lines and give Serbs more land adjoining Serbia proper.

But the mediators apparently dismissed his map on the spot with Mr. Eckhard calling it "strikingly different from the one that the co-chairmen have so painstakingly (been) negotiating."

Mr. Karadzic also revived proposals to change boundaries of provinces through a vote, which Lord Owen characterised as that "wretched business of a referendum."

"It's quite impossible to have a poll about a border in a country that has three million people on the move," he said.



A Serbian officer peers through binoculars to the Croatian positions in front of 122 mm guns near Tuzla in the Serb-held enclave of Krajina. Croatian and Serb forces have been clashing in southern Croatia since Croats launched an offensive against the self-declared Serbian republic on Jan. 22 (AFP photo).

NATO boss: West must be ready to use force in troubled areas

MUNICH (R) — North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) Secretary General Manfred Woerner said Sunday the West must be ready to use force in troubled areas like Bosnia to stay credible, and warned allies not to cut defences too deeply.

Mr. Woerner was addressing a Munich meeting of senior Western defence officials dominated by a visit by new U.S. Secretary of Defence Les Aspin, who conferred with allied leaders on how to solve the conflict in former Yugoslavia.

The NATO chief said the United Nations was not able to handle everything by itself and that peacekeeping and aid must not be a substitute for curbing aggression itself.

He spoke as international mediators in New York pressured Bosnia's warring parties in vain at the weekend — on the eve of a

Security Council session — to negotiate an end to Europe's most disastrous conflict since World War II.

"We must prevent Europe from becoming a place where a few islands of stability are surrounded by a sea of instability," Mr. Woerner told the two-day privately-sponsored conference.

NATO, founded to deter the Soviet-led Warsaw Pact, now has as its task to "shape peace," he said.

"We must not shrink from the legitimate use of force if we are to remain credible."

NATO, stepping out of its traditional role as defender of Western Europe, has offered to enforce a no-fly zone in Bosnia announced by the U.N. Security Council last October.

Mr. Woerner said, however, he was concerned at the rate at which Western allies were cutting their defence forces now the cold

war was over, saying the force reductions could have a serious impact on NATO defence capability.

"In many cases peacekeepers must be drawn from our main defence forces," he said.

German Chancellor Helmut Kohl, addressing the meeting Saturday, made an impassioned plea for the Americans to keep a substantial military presence in Europe in their own interest.

President Bill Clinton plans to cut the U.S. military presence in Europe, which was more than 300,000 when the Berlin Wall fell in 1989, to 100,000 soldiers, 50,000 fewer than envisioned by former President George Bush.

But Mr. Kohl said Germany, battling to finance the buildup of impoverished East Germany, may cut its own armed forces to less than 370,000, the figure agreed upon in international talks at unification in 1990.

Jesse Jackson tells Haitians: Hold on

NEW YORK (AP) — The Rev. Jesse Jackson told 300 cheering Haitians demonstrating outside the United Nations Saturday to hold on until democracy is restored and ousted President Jean-Bertrand Aristide returns to power.

Rev. Jackson spoke with his customary fire before an enthusiastic crowd that needed warming up after marching through a snowstorm and icy temperatures from City Hall, miles away in downtown Manhattan.

"We will keep the pressure on until democracy is restored and Aristide is returned to power," Jackson said.

The Haitians, who were holding up pictures of Mr. Aristide, cried, "no Aristide, no peace" and "Aristide Cedras out."

Mr. Aristide became the first democratically elected president of Haiti just seven months before he was ousted in a September 1991 coup. Lt. Gen. Raoul Cedras, Haiti's ranking military strongman, now rules the nation together with Prime Minister Marc Bazin.

In a meeting with Mr. Aristide Friday, Secretary of State Warren

Christopher denounced the current leaders of Haiti as bolder of "illegal power" and promised, "they will not prevail."

President Bill Clinton acknowledged Friday that concerns about potential human rights abuses in the event of Mr. Aristide's return were legitimate.

In remarks to reporters, Mr. Clinton said democracy must be restored in a way that would preserve human rights during the transition.

Rev. Jackson also emphasised the importance of a peaceful transition, calling for an end to "necklacing," a method of execution that has been used in Haiti in which a tire is put around the victim's body and set aflame.

Mr. Bazin has rejected a U.N. plan to send about 500 civilian observers to Haiti as the first step in the return of democracy. However, Friday he said his military-installed government supported the presence of observers and democratic reforms.

Mr. Aristide had been scheduled to join Rev. Jackson in a rally in Miami Sunday. But Lela McDowell, his spokeswoman, said Saturday Mr. Aristide would not appear.

"He'll be releasing statements and communicating with the Haitian people through a variety of means," but will not make a public appearance, Ms. McDowell said in a telephone interview from Washington.

Rev. Jackson also planned to visit Haitian refugees held by immigration authorities at Guantanamo Bay U.S. Military Base in Cuba.

Meanwhile, foreign diplomats see no more than a slender hope of reviving a U.N.-led diplomatic effort to resolve Haiti's 16-month-old political crisis.

The army-backed de facto government of Mr. Bazin showed "extreme bad faith" in negotiations with United Nations special envoy Dante Caputo during a four-day visit that ended Thursday, the diplomats said.

One diplomat took heart from a government statement Saturday claiming that "there was a certain narrowing of differences on several points" at the three meetings between Mr. Bazin and Mr. Caputo.

"They appear to be leaving the door ajar, but it remains to be seen if Caputo will believe their sincerity," the diplomat said.

Keating calls Australian election for March 13

CANBERRA (R) — Australian Prime Minister Paul Keating, ending months of speculation, Sunday called a general election for March 13 and both sides immediately picked the faltering economy as their main battleground.

Mr. Keating stunned reporters by announcing the date at a news conference expected to be devoted to his Labour Party's defeat in Western Australia state polls Saturday.

"This election will be principally about the economy and unemployment," he told them.

Some 11.3 per cent of the workforce is unemployed, one of the highest rates in the Western world. Australia's recession is the worst since the great depression of the 1930s.

Opinion polls show the Labour government, in power for a decade, and the opposition conservative Liberal-National Coalition neck-and-neck.

Opposition leader John Hewson said he could win the election because the Western Australian poll showed middle-class Australians deserting Labour. "The dominant issue was economic management and unemployment," he told reporters.

Mr. Keating, who ousted Labour Prime Minister Bob Hawke in December 1991, said that on Tuesday he would deliver "a major economic statement with new measures which will dramatically expand business opportunities and accelerate economic growth."

"This will be a statement about emerging business and the economy and consolidating the growth we have."

On Monday morning, he said, he would outline Australia's "enormous" trade opportunities in Asia and the government's strategy for taking advantage of them.

Mr. Keating has sought to refocus Australia on its role in Asia and favours moves to lessen traditional ties with Britain.

Mr. Hewson's alternative economic strategy is centred on a value-added tax on consumption. Although it would be offset by income tax cuts, this "goods and services tax" has become the main target of government counter-attacks.

The election will also be a personal battle between Mr. Keating, who left school at 14 and is famous for his savage political invective, and Mr. Hewson, an aloof, former academic-economist with little political experience.

During a parliamentary debate Mr. Keating once earned a rebuke from the speaker for calling his opponent among other things "a piece of criminal garbage" and "a stupid four-mouthed grub."

The prime minister said Sunday the Western Australian result had no impact on his decision to start his campaign now.

WORLD NEWS IN BRIEF

Abortion issues cause storm in Italy

ROME (R) — An outspoken call by a Roman Catholic archbishop for abortion to be outlawed in Italy has provoked a storm of criticism. "The state has only the duty to defend life in every case it does not have the right to allow life to be suppressed," Cardinal Giacomo Biffi, the Archbishop of Bologna, said in a service. "The respect for life has to be total and coherent. How can we condemn organised crime and approve the killing in the maternal womb of an unborn baby?" Italian daily Corriere Della Sera quoted Cardinal Biffi as saying. The Corriere Della Sera criticised the cardinal's emotive language in a front-page editorial while politicians accused him of meddling. "Abortion will not be prevented by criminalising women or by limiting their liberty," said Livia Turco, national women's organiser for the ex-Communist Democratic Party of the Left (PDS). "It is not the job of the religious authorities to inspect the laws of a sovereign state like Italy," the PDS deputy added. Abortion was legalised in Catholic Italy in 1978, a decision reinforced by a referendum in 1981.

Quake hits northwestern Japan

TOKYO (R) — An earthquake measuring 6.6 on the Richter Scale rocked northwestern Japan Sunday, but no damage or casualties were immediately reported. The quake, with its epicentre 30 kilometres under water in the Japan Sea near Wajima, happened at 10:22 p.m. (1322 GMT). The Meteorological Agency said. The agency issued a warning that there could be a tsunami, or tidal wave, as a result. The tremor lasted for about a minute, shaking buildings and disrupting rail traffic in coastal areas.

6 killed in S. Africa shooting

JOHANNESBURG (R) — Gunmen attacked a squatter camp near Johannesburg Sunday, killing six people and wounding 11, police said. The African National Congress (ANC) said eight people were killed and 15 wounded when gunmen with Kalashnikov rifles attacked the Chris Hani Camp in the black township of Daveyton east of Johannesburg.

Poll shows Danish 'yes' to Maastricht

COPENHAGEN (R) — A clear majority of Danes are likely to vote 'yes' to the European Community Maastricht Treaty in their second referendum on the pact on May 18, according to an opinion poll. The poll by the Observa Institute, published in the national daily BT, showed 60 per cent would vote 'yes' while 27 per cent would vote 'no' and 13 per cent were undecided. Danes voted 'no' by a 50.7-49.3 per cent margin to the treaty on closer European political, economic and monetary union in the first referendum on June 2 last year. The result, blocking Europe-wide implementation of the pact, has caused one of the worst crises in Community history. The new vote will be on a revised deal agreed with the EC at a summit in Edinburgh in December, allowing Danes to opt out of the treaty's long-term plans for a common currency and joint defence.

Space mirror burns up in atmosphere

MOSCOW (R) — A Russian space ship that reflected a beam of sunlight over Europe at night last week, using a unique plastic mirror, burnt up in the Earth's atmosphere on Sunday, ITAR-TASS News Agency said. The thin shaft of light, part of an experiment testing the feasibility of projects to extend daylight hours during the polar winters of northern territories, was seen in the skies over France Thursday. But it went unnoticed as it played across clouds covering southern Germany, Poland and Belarus. TASS said the unmanned Progress cargo ship, which unfurled a 20-metre (65-foot) wide plastic mirror to project the light, burnt up according to schedule as it hit the atmosphere.

Belgium drifts further apart

BRUSSELS (R) — Belgium's parliament has approved by just two votes a sweeping state reform which will lead the country into a new federal era, further separating Dutch-speaking Flanders and French-speaking Wallonia. The coalition government of Prime Minister Jean-Luc Dehaene mustered 144 votes — only two more than the two-thirds majority of 142 required — to amend the first article of the Belgian constitution, Belga News Agency said. Thirty-six deputies voted against. The new deal grants more autonomy to Flanders in the north and Wallonia in the south. Mr. Dehaene says the new regional powers should provide more stable government and bring an end to squabbling between the two language groups. The central parliament will be significantly reduced in size, central responsibilities will be significantly reduced in size, passing more responsibilities such as foreign trade and agriculture to the regions.

Pope prays for Ugandan martyrs

NAMUGONGO, Uganda (R) — Pope John Paul prayed Sunday before symbols of 19th century teenage martyrs who were roasted slowly over a pit for refusing to submit to a Ugandan king's homosexual demands.

Hundreds of thousands of people turned out to see the Pope celebrate mass on a tiny island in an artificial pond at the Sanctuary of the Martyrs just outside Kampala.

The mass procession on the fifth day of the Pope's African tour was led by Karamojong tribal dancers from northeast Uganda who wore goat skins and ostrich feathers.

The shrine was built on the grounds where, in the 1880s, the King Mwanga of Buganda ordered the execution of 45 boys who had converted to Catholicism or Anglicanism.

The Pope prayed before an Anglican Church reconstruction of a clay pit under a thatched brick hut where 22 of the boys were roasted alive. The bodies of the martyrs were represented by statues bound in bamboo sticks.

Armenians win ground in new Karabakh offensive

MOSCOW (Agencies) — Armenian forces have launched a major new offensive in the disputed territory of Nagorno-Karabakh and captured at least two Azerbaijani-held villages, reports from both sides said.

The Armenian News Agency, Sankh, said Armenian fighters had won control of 11 settlements in the past two days including Chikrand, one of the largest in the north of the war-torn enclave. It said Azerbaijani forces were "retreating in panic."

Azerbaijan's Turan News Agency said fierce fighting for strategic heights in the region raged overnight and Saturday morning. It acknowledged the loss of Chikrand and a second village, Syrkhavend.

More than 2,500 people have been killed in a five-year undeclared war between the two former Soviet republics.

It focuses on Nagorno-Karabakh, a mountainous area which is mostly populated by Armenians but was placed under Azerbaijan's jurisdiction by Soviet authorities in 1923.

The conflict has drained the economies of both countries and Armenia, in particular, is suffering an acute energy crisis because of a blockade imposed by its neighbour.

Military success in Nagorno-Karabakh could help to ease pressure on Armenian President Levon Ter-Petrosyan, who faces growing demands to quit.

At least 100,000 Armenians, weary of unheated homes and power cuts, demonstrated for his resignation Friday.

Snark and Turan said border villages in both Armenia and Azerbaijan had been shelled in the past 24 hours.

The latest hostilities followed a



Azeri soldiers prepare an attack on Armenian position near Novotekovka village in Nagorno Karabakh. Despite winter conditions of cold and snow the war between Azerbaijanis and Armenians for the disputed Nagorno Karabakh region has not let up (AFP photo).

hull of about 10 days in the conflict, which has rumbled on since 1988 despite frequent attempts at mediation by Russia, Iran and others.

Meanwhile in Georgia, Russian helicopters Saturday brought relief supplies and evacuated refugees from the blockaded town of Tkvarcheli in the secessionist Georgian province of Abkhazia, news reports said.

Also Saturday, clashes between the Georgian army and Abkhazian separatists continued.

The Interfax News Agency quoted Abkhazian reports as saying a Georgian SU-25 fighter jet was shot down Saturday over the river Gumista, which separates the warring sides near the Abkhazian capital of Sukhumi.

The Georgian military confirmed the report, but said the plane was safeguarding the Tkvarcheli airport. Interfax reported.

The Abkhazians also shelled residential neighbourhoods of Sukhumi, wounding two people and damaging several houses, prompting Georgian artillery to return fire, according to the Georgian News Agency.

The Georgian military command said Abkhazian militants planted a bomb Friday in a water reservoir near the town of Ochamchira, leaving the Georgian-controlled town without drinking water.

Also Friday, a Georgian Mi-8 military helicopter crash-landed in the Georgian town of Kutaisi,

the Georgian agency reported. It said officials blamed bad weather and strong winds for the crash, in which three crew members and five passengers died and several people suffered injuries.

Amid the violence, five Russian helicopters Saturday brought 22 tonnes of food and medicines to Tkvarcheli, which has been blockaded for several months by the Georgian troops, and returned with 277 elderly people, women and children aboard. Interfax and the ITAR-TASS News Agency said.

Hundreds of people have been evacuated from Tkvarcheli in the framework of a U.N.-sponsored humanitarian action, and 553 refugees have temporarily settled in the Russian Black Sea resort of Sochi, ITAR-TASS said.

Russia protested to Georgia Saturday at the latest in a series of attacks on its military bases in the Transcaucasian state, Interfax News Agency said.

The Russian army command in Georgia demanded "resolute measures" to investigate an attack on a depot in the capital Tbilisi in which 40 armed men beat up three Russian guards and made off with television sets, radios, cameras and vehicles.

It said that unless the incident was properly investigated, it would conclude the Georgian leadership had authorised acts of violence against Russian forces stationed in Georgia.

Georgia ordered an immediate investigation into Friday's attack, saying all necessary steps should be taken to punish the culprits, ITAR-TASS News Agency said.

It was the latest in a spate of similar incidents which have severely damaged ties between the two former Soviet republics.

COLUMN

U.K. reported planning art sale

LONDON (R) — Britain's government is considering selling off its multi-million pound art collection, the National Press Association reported. It quoted "well-placed sources" as saying the treasury was making inquiries about selling the collection, which now adorns the walls of embassies around the world, as well as the offices of government ministers. The collection includes works by Gainsborough, Sickert, Hockney and other celebrated British artists. Opposition Labour Party member of parliament Bob Cryer said he would fight the move. "This is selling off the family silver with a vengeance," he said, adding that he would bring up the matter in parliament Monday.

Leading solo yachtsman rounds Cape Horn

PARIS (R) — Leading solo round-the-world yachtsman Alain Gauthier of France rounded Cape Horn and set course for the finishing point at Les Sables d'Olonne on the west coast of France. Organisers of the Vendée Globe Race said Gauthier passed Cape Horn in difficult conditions with heavy seas and winds of 35 knots (65 kph), gusting up to 80 kph. Only eight of the 14 starters who left Les Sables d'Olonne on Nov. 22 are still left in the race. The 30-year-old Gauthier, who has a lead of around 350 nautical miles over Philippe Poupon of France, has another 7,000 miles to go before the expected finish towards the end of the month.

Postal office: 'Elvis just won't go away'

SACRAMENTO, Calif. (AP) — This time it wasn't just a postage stamp, but the cancellation that got Elvis Presley fans all shook up. The main post office in Sacramento, trying to please fans hoping to get a "return to sender" marking next to the new 29-cent Elvis stamp, had rubber stamps made for a special day of cancellations. But while Elvis sang, "return to sender, address unknown," postal workers stamped, "returned to sender, address unknown." Customers crowding the post office didn't seem bothered by the difference. The cancellation was a lot closer than the machine-generated labels that usually appear on mail with incorrect addresses: "undeliverable as addressed." "We haven't used that (returned to sender) stamp in years," said Postal Service spokesman Gus Ruiz. That didn't stop thousands of fans from mailing letters to bogus addresses in hopes of getting the famed hipster next to an Elvis stamp. Joyce McChalo telephoned envelopes to her own home with the address written incorrectly. But the post office fixed the address and delivered them anyway. On Friday, she got her "returned to sender" stamp. "It's such a hype. It's fun," she said.

British girl refuses 'holiday' rape compensation

NEWPORT, Wales (R) — A storm of protest has erupted around a British judge who allowed a 15-year-old schoolboy who raped a classmate to walk free from court. Newspapers and television said the victim, also 15, refused to accept £500 (£720) awarded by Judge John Prosser in compensation. A police chief called for a review of the decision and women's groups joined the protests. Judge Prosser put the boy under a three-year supervision order but ordered him to pay the money to "give this girl the chance of a good holiday to help her get over her trauma." He said jailing the youth, whom he described as "one of the most popular boys in school," could introduce him to more "bad habits." The chief constable of the Welsh County of Gwent, where the rape occurred, said he would formally challenge the decision with legal officials Monday. "I am also deeply concerned about the fact that the victim of this crime is coming very much last. A very great deal is spent on the rehabilitation of offenders and very little on the victims," John Over told BBC Radio. "Decent people are getting heartily sick of the fact that victims are coming last in the queue." Ruth Hall, spokeswoman for Women Against Rape, said: "We've often seen judges treat crimes of rape less seriously than crimes against property. Something has to be done on a broader scale about judges and the courts and the way they treat women."

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